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CASTIGAT
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I. D. engl. Burns

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THE WORKS

OF

ROBERT BURNS.

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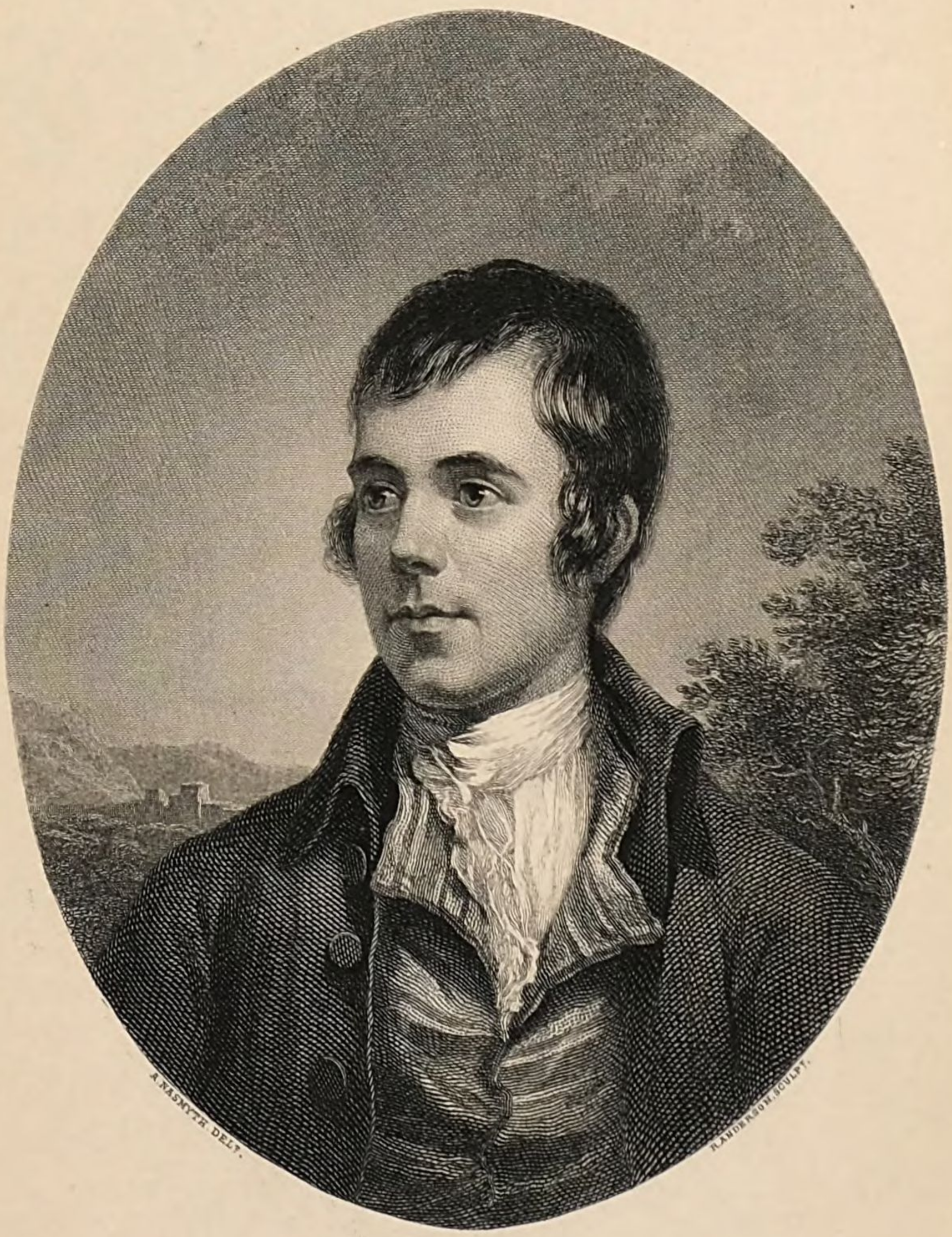

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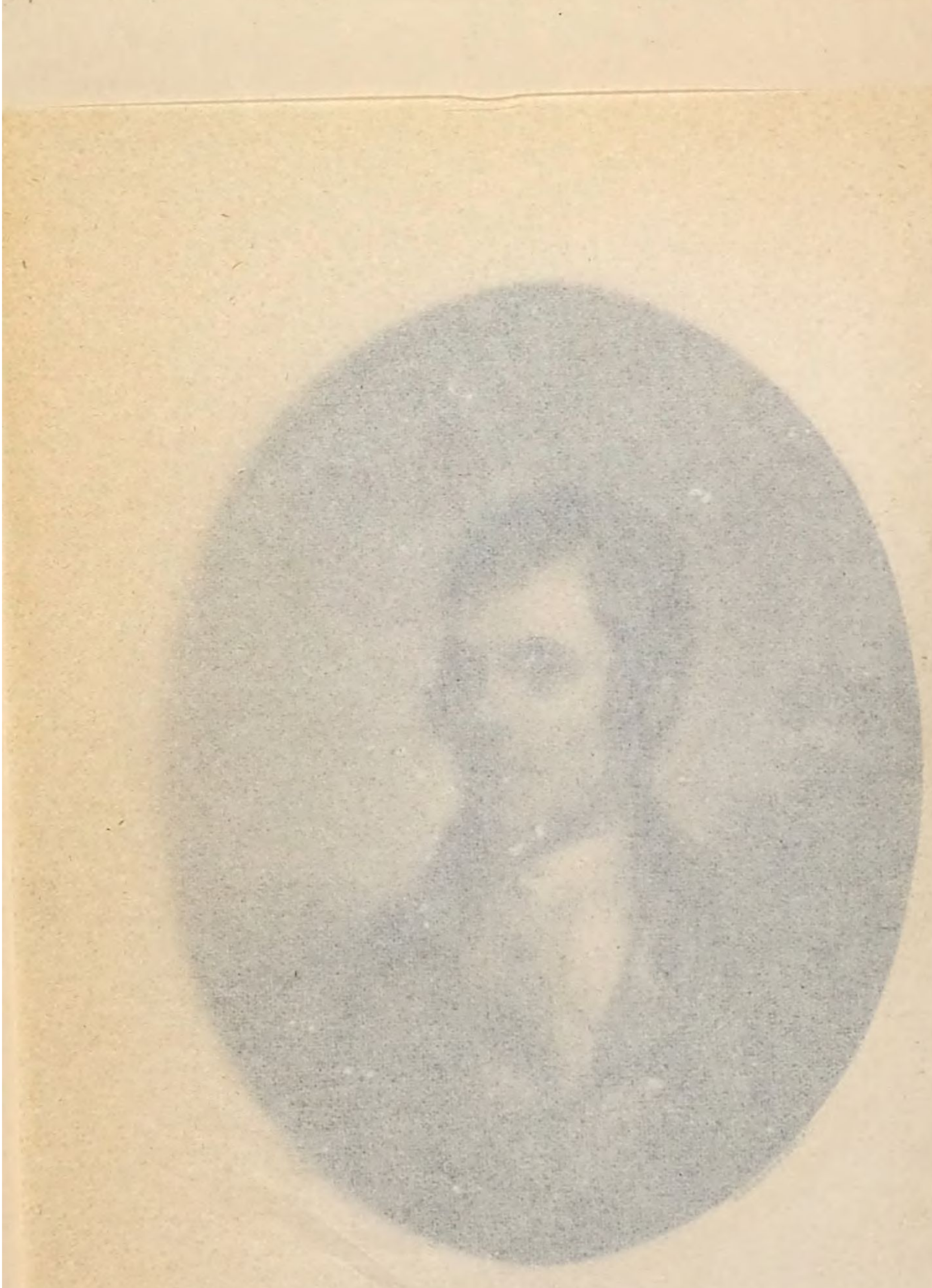

THE BIRTHPLACE OF BURNS.

"A blast o' Janwar' win'
Blew hansel in on Robin."

THE WORKS

OF

ROBERT BURNS

VOLUME FIRST

POETRY

Edinburgh
JAMES THIN, PUBLISHER TO THE UNIVERSITY
1893

Div. 211

BAYERISCHE
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THESE VOLUMES ARE

Dedicated

TO

THOMAS CARLYLE,

THE COUNTRYMAN OF

ROBERT BURNS,

AND THE

MOST LUMINOUS ILLUSTRATOR OF HIS

LIFE AND WRITINGS.

PREFACE.

In issuing Volume First of a new Library Edition of the entire works of Robert Burns, the editor desires to point out the peculiar claims on public attention which the present undertaking professes to offer.

It seems now to be universally allowed that Burns, as an author, and as a subject of instructive and deeply interesting biographical study—chiefly, as mirrored in his own writings—is entitled to stand in the foremost rank of British literature. It cannot, however, be alleged that any exhaustive effort has, as yet, been made to collect the whole of his poems and correspondence, and present these in the most attractive shape ;—shewing the author's text with critical exactness, unabridged and untampered with, and recording the numerous and interesting variations in his manuscripts and several authorised editions. To supply that desideratum is the chief aim of the present publication. The poems and lyrics are arranged in strictly chronological order ; the date of each composition, and the original channel of publication, are prominently recorded ; and a very considerable number of the author's undoubted productions now, for the first time, appear in a collective form, several of these having hitherto been excluded from the public eye.

The author's prose writings will be similarly arranged ; and these, taken in connection with the information

supplied in the annotations, will afford to the reader two separate rehearsals of his thrilling life-drama told by himself—the one in poetry and song, and the other in the richest prose.

The volumes will proclaim for themselves the earnest labour and efforts which have been made by both publisher and editor to obtain the poet's original manuscripts, in order to collate these with the text, and render this edition complete and satisfactory. To those holders of the poet's autograph poems and letters who have kindly lent them to be made use of in the present work, it may suffice in the meantime to state that their favours are specially acknowledged in the editorial notes attached to the respective pieces. An opportunity will be taken in the General Preface, at the completion of the work, to make farther acknowledgments, and more prominently record the names of these and future contributors.

The present is not the first time the editor has come before the public as an expounder and arranger of the writings of Burns, and a delineator of submerged and mystified facts in his brief and eccentric career. He has served a long apprenticeship to the business on which he now ventures; and, without undervaluing the labours of his predecessors, or of cotemporary workers in the same field, he is confident of producing, in these volumes, an Edition of Burns that shall leave little in the shape of new biographical facts, or fresh literary materials, to be gleaned and supplemented by others.

WM. SCOTT DOUGLAS.

EDINBURGH, 19*th Feb.* 1877.

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PREFACE.

(*To the Original Edition, Kilmarnock*, 1786.)

The following trifles are not the production of the Poet, who, with all the advantages of learned art, and perhaps amid the elegancies and idlenesses of upper life, looks down for a rural theme, with an eye to Theocrites or Virgil. To the Author of this, these and other celebrated names (their countrymen) are, in their original languages, 'a fountain shut up, and a book sealed.' Unacquainted with the necessary requisites for commencing Poet by rule, he sings the sentiments and manners he felt and saw in himself and his rustic compeers around him, in his and their native language. Though a Rhymer from his earliest years, at least from the earliest impulses of the softer passions, it was not till very lately that the applause, perhaps the partiality, of Friendship, wakened his vanity so far as to make him think anything of his was worth showing; and none of the following works were ever composed with a view to the press. To amuse himself with the little creations of his own fancy, amid the toil and fatigues of a laborious life; to transcribe the various feelings, the loves, the griefs, the hopes, the fears, in his own

breast; to find some kind of counterpoise to the struggles of a world, always an alien scene, a task uncouth to the poetical mind; these were his motives for courting the Muses, and in these he found Poetry to be its own reward.

Now that he appears in the public character of an Author, he does it with fear and trembling. So dear is fame to the rhyming tribe, that even he, an obscure, nameless Bard, shrinks aghast at the thought of being branded as 'An impertinent blockhead, obtruding his nonsense on the world; and because he can make a shift to jingle a few doggerel Scotch rhymes together, looks upon himself as a Poet of no small consequence forsooth.'

It is an observation of that celebrated Poet *—whose divine Elegies do honor to our language, our nation, and our species—that 'Humility has depressed many a genius to a hermit, but never raised one to fame.' If any Critic catches at the word *genius*, the Author tells him, once for all, that he certainly looks upon himself as possest of some poetic abilities, otherwise his publishing in the manner he has done, would be a manœuvre below the worst character which, he hopes, his worst enemy will ever give him: but to the genius of a Ramsay, or the glorious dawnings of the poor, unfortunate Ferguson, he, with equal unaffected

---

* Shenstone.

sincerity, declares that, even in his highest pulse of vanity, he has not the most distant pretensions. These two justly admired Scotch Poets he has often had in his eye in the following pieces; but rather with a view to kindle at their flame, than for servile imitation.

To his Subscribers the Author returns his most sincere thanks. Not the mercenary bow over a counter, but the heart-throbbing gratitude of the Bard, conscious how much he is indebted to Benevolence and Friendship for gratifying him, if he deserves it, in that dearest wish of every poetic bosom—to be distinguished. He begs his readers, particularly the Learned and the Polite, who may honor him with a perusal, that they will make every allowance for Education and Circumstances of Life: but if, after a fair, candid, and impartial criticism, he shall stand convicted of Dulness and Nonsense, let him be done by, as he would in that case do by others—let him be condemned without mercy, to contempt and oblivion.

DEDICATION.

(*First Edinburgh Edition*, 1787.)

TO THE

NOBLEMEN AND GENTLEMEN OF THE CALEDONIAN HUNT.

My Lords and Gentlemen,

A Scottish Bard, proud of the name, and whose highest ambition is to sing in his Country's service—where shall he so properly look for patronage as to the illustrious Names of his native Land; those who bear the honours and inherit the virtues of their Ancestors? The Poetic Genius of my Country found me as the prophetic bard Elijah did Elisha—at the *plough*, and threw her inspiring mantle over me. She bade me sing the loves, the joys, the rural scenes and rural pleasures of my natal Soil, in my native tongue: I tuned my wild, artless notes, as she inspired. She whispered me to come to this ancient metropolis of Caledonia, and lay my Songs under your honoured protection: I now obey her dictates.

Though much indebted to your goodness, I do not approach you, my Lords and Gentlemen, in the usual style of dedication, to thank you for past favours; that path is so hackneyed by prostituted Learning, that honest Rusticity is ashamed of it. Nor do I present this Address with the venal soul of a servile Author, looking for a continuation of those favours: I was bred to the Plough, and am independent. I come to claim the common Scottish name with you, my illustrious Countrymen; and to tell the world that I glory in the title. I come to congratulate my Country, that the blood of her ancient heroes still runs uncontaminated; and that from your courage, knowledge, and public spirit, she may expect protection, wealth, and liberty. In the last place, I come to proffer my warmest wishes to the Great Fountain of Honour, the Monarch of the Universe, for your welfare and happiness.

When you go forth to waken the Echoes, in the ancient and favourite amusement of your Forefathers, may Pleasure ever be of your party; and may Social-joy await your return! When harassed in courts or camps with the jostlings of bad men and bad measures, may the honest consciousness of injured Worth attend your return to your native Seats; and may Domestic Happiness, with a smiling welcome, meet you at your gates! May Corruption shrink at your kindling, indignant glance; and may tyranny in the Ruler

and licentiousness in the People equally find you an inexorable foe!

I have the honour to be, with the sincerest gratitude and highest respect,

MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN,

Your most devoted, humble Servant,

ROBERT BURNS.

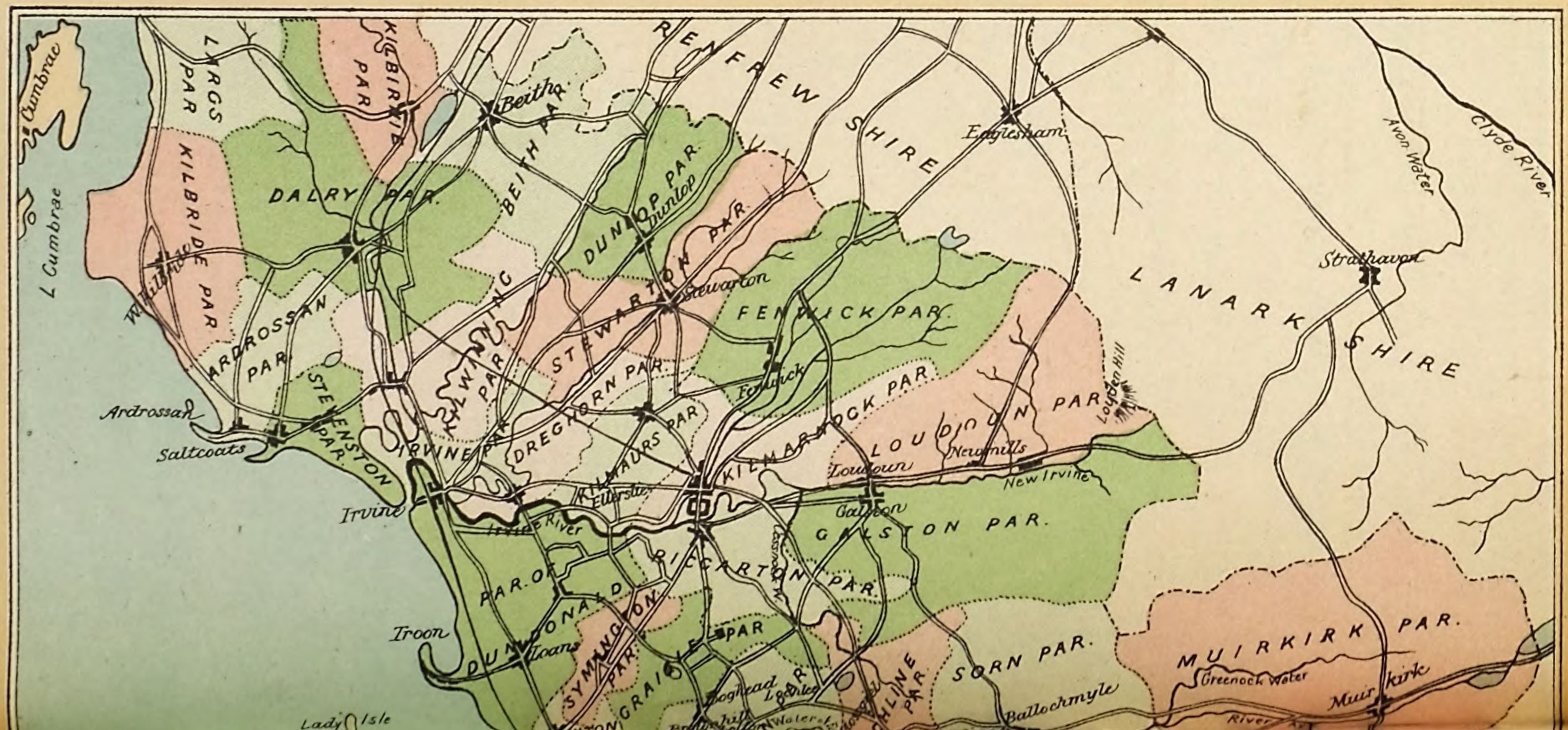
EDINBURGH, *April* 4, 1787.

Map of the

PRINCIPAL PORTIONS OF AYRSHIRE

AT THE CLOSE OF LAST CENTURY.

SPECIALLY DESIGNED TO ACCOMPANY THE LIBRARY EDITION OF BURNS



FIRTH of CLYDE
Newton
Ayr
Greenan
Dunure
Culzean Bay
Culzean Castle
King Robert's or Turnberry Castle
Girvan
Dalgarroch
Afton Lodge
Auchincruive
Coyle R.
Whiteford
Brown Carrick Hill
Newark Hill
Burns Cot.
Mc Oliphant
Craiglie
Rockyle
Glendonner
Pool
Barnsoul
Auchinleck Castle
Lugar River
Corsancone Hill
New Cumnock
River Nith
Afton
Glen Afton
Maybole
Kirkmichael
Crosshill
Straiton
Kilkerran
Stinchar Water
Loch Doon
R. Doon
Dalmellington
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AYR PAR.
MAYBOLE PAR.
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KIRKMICHAEL PAR.
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ROBERT BURNS.

A SUMMARY OF HIS CAREER AND GENIUS.

"They say best men are moulded out of faults,
And, for the most, become much more the better
For being a little bad."
—*Measure for Measure*, Act v. Scene 1.

"Salve vetustæ vitæ imago
Et specimen venientis Ævi."—G. Buchanan.

I.—INTRODUCTORY.

In a bibliography, scarcely inferior in variety to that which has gathered around Shakespeare, there is a tract with the heading, "Men who have failed." Its purpose is apparent; we can construct the sermon from the text, as Cuvier reconstructed a monster from the inspection of a bone: but the title, as applied, is false. Whatever Burns's merits or demerits as a man, the vital part of his career was a swift success, and, what is of more moment, a lasting. Every decade in which his presence recedes his power grows: his passionate strength has overleapt the barriers of his dialect. Almost every British critic, during the last half-century, has pelted or hailed him: everything that should be said of him, and everything that should not, has been said, often clumsily, often disconnectedly, yet on the whole exhaustively; so that little remains but to correct conflicting exaggerations. Burns has suffered from two sets of assailants. The "unco guid," who "compound for" social meanness and religious malice, by

damning other things "they have no mind to," had a score against him, which, during his life and after, they did their best to pay: and they believed him to be worse than he was because they wished it. The "unco" bad were keen to exaggerate his weakness, that they might throw over their own vulgar vices the shield of his great name. On the other hand, the idolatry of a nation, prone to canonise its illustrious dead, has oppositely erred. "No poet, from the blind singer of Troy downwards, is his peer;" "What would become of the civilised world were his writings obliterated?"—such are the common-places of festival speeches, of journalists patriotically inspired. He has been worshipped, shouted about, preached at, pointed to as a warning, held forth as an example. "The roar of his drunkards" has proclaimed him a saint; the grim moralist, to the zealot's joy, has denounced him as the chief of sinners. It is as natural as harmless that a recent accomplished biographer, selected on the Heraclitean principle of contrasts, should sigh over his "Socinian tendencies," and daintily regret the publication of his quenchless satires: it is inevitable that a literary censor, whose writings are sometimes models of style, always mirrors of complacency, should label his wood-notes as hardly superfine. He has had plenty of praise, plenty of blame, enough of "allowances," far more than enough of patronage: he has rarely had—what few men have often—simple justice.

"The work of Burns," says his first editor, "may be considered as a monument not to his own name only but to the expiring genius of an ancient and independent nation." The antithesis of our chief latinist better represents the attitude of our chief poet, who was at once the last of the old and the first of the new. He came in the autumn or evening of our northern literature, but around him was the freshness of the morning and the May. Like Chaucer, he stood on the edge of two eras, and was a prophet as well as a recorder, embalming and exalting legend and song, affronting and rending inveterate superstitions; the satirist as well as the lyrist of his race. A Jacobite and a Jacobin, holding

out hands to Charlie over the straits and to Washington across the Atlantic, the monument of his verse "vetustæ vitæ imago" bears a beacon "venientis ævi." Pupil of Ramsay, master of Tannahill, it is natural that Chloris and Damon should linger in his pages beside Jean and Gavin and Davie, and the beggars at Nanse's splore. Everyone of judgment sees that his most underived and passionate work was his best, that his fame rests most firmly on the records of his wildest or freest moods; more on the Songs and the Satires and Tam O'Shanter and the Cantata than on the "Cottar's Saturday Night." But to realise his relation to the thought and music of his country requires a study of his antecedents. Our space confines us to a brief statement of his historical position and an exhibition of his character in a summary of his life.

Burns was an educated, but not a learned man, and he drew next to nothing from our early literature. Of the old Ballads, despite his residence in the border land, he made comparatively little use. The seventeenth century had little to give him; when the strife of Covenanter and Cavalier held the hearts and threatened the lives of men, the northern Muses were dumb. Poetry was shrivelled under the frown of Presbyteries. The stream of native song had been flowing, under black weeds, till it came to light again in the Jacobite minstrelsy,—where the spirit of the hills first makes itself felt in the voices of the plain,—in the pastorals of Ramsay, the fresh canvas of Thomson and Beattie, and the sketches of native life by Fergusson. From these, his generously acknowledged masters, Burns inherited much; most from the ill-starred genius of the last. The loves, animosities, and temptations of the two poets were akin; they were both, almost to boasting, devotees of independence; both keen patriots, they were alike inspired with a livid hate of their country's besetting sin, hypocrisy; but there is, on a smaller scale, the same difference between them that there is between Chaucer and Shakespeare. "The Farmer's Ingle" is a quaint picture of a rustic fireside north of the Tweed, but "The Cottar" is a store of household words

for every Scottish home in the nineteenth century; "Plainstaines and Causey" prattle, with playful humour, of the freaks and follies of the society that moves over them; but about the bridges that span the Doon there is thrown the moonlight of the fairies of the "Midsummer Night." In greater measure, Burns was the heir of the nameless minstrels, on whose ungraven tombs he throws a wreath of laurels wet with grateful tears. But he likewise exalts them, idealising their plain-spoken pathos or laughter, making their local interests universal and abiding.

He was enabled to do so by the fact of his being inspired by the spirit of the Future as well as of the Past. He lived when the so-called "Romantic" literary movement had been initiated by the publication of Percy's "Reliques," Macpherson's "Ossian," and the immortal forgeries of the most precocious genius in our tongue. Burns never names Chatterton,—probably because he could not read his masterpieces,—but they have many points of contact. Both were emphatically Bards, as opposed to the poets of culture by whom they were, in the eighteenth century, almost exclusively preceded; both were "sleepless souls," but their themes lay far apart. The mysteriously stranded child to whose dingy garret there came visions of armies in the air, the flapping of ravens' wings, the sound of seas in a tumult like that of Kubla Khan, is the ancestor of Coleridge on his magic side: Burns, of Wordsworth, to whom he bequeathed his pathetic interpretation of nature; and of Byron, the inheritor of his "passions wild and strong." They are together petrels of the storm that, shaking "thrones, princedoms, powers, dominions," converted Versailles into a moral Pompeii, and drove the classic canons of art into a museum of antiquities. The "Freedom dreste in blodde steyned veste" of the one is like the "stalwart ghaist" with the "sacred-poesie-Libertie" of the other. But, if the Rowley poems had any influence on Burns, it came directly through Cowper, who may have borrowed the Olney Hymn, "God moves in a mysterious way," from Chatterton's beginning, "O God, whose thunder shakes the

sky," and handed on the same devotional mood to the author of the prayer—

> "O thou Great Being, what Thou art
> Surpasses me to know."

The same breath blows through diverse instruments that have, as regards religion, the same note of scorn for insincerity, and beneath it one major key of perplexity, awe, and resignation. The defiance that rises in Queen Mab and the Revolt of Islam, almost to the shrillness of a shriek, the lurid light of the red star of Cain, belong to a later age.

William Cowper—a reed shaken with the wind, and yet a prophet—a terror-stricken "castaway," and yet the most conspicuous leader of a revolt, found in Scotland a vicegerent greater than himself,—a mighty mass of manhood, who, free from the intellectual fetters that bound, the ghastly clouds that obscured, his elder contemporary, struck more ringing blows, and soared into a higher heaven.

Finally—*pacé* Mr Carlyle to the contrary—the condition of our literature at the time was, on the whole, favourable to the appearance of our greatest interpreter. It has been the fashion to talk contemptuously of the men who, though with different ideas of finish, reared many of the foundations upon which we build; but, if we except Poetry and Physical Science, the eighteenth century produced most of what the nineteenth is content to criticise. "In its latter half," says Mr Charles Scott in a paper displaying rare insight and sympathy, "Scotland was at the culmination of its intellectual glory. It never stood higher relatively to the rest of Europe." After supporting his assertion by the names of Hume, Robertson, Reid, Stewart, and Adam Smith, he proceeds, "The Bench, the Bar, and the Pulpit were adorned by men who, sometimes rough and quaint, were always vigorous and original. We had in those days the greatest statesman Britain has seen, . . . the approach of the French Revolution had stirred the blood of the people, . . . their great poet alone was wanting. The hour struck and the man appeared."

II.—SURVEY OF BURNS'S LIFE.

I.—*First Period, Alloway,* 1759-1766. (*Æt.* 1-7.)

Burns was qualified to be a national poet by his start from the meeting of all the waters of his country's literature, no less so by the circumstances of his birth and the grasp of his genius. Scion of a family on the North-East, members of which, by his own account, had shared the fortunes of the Earl of Mar, he was born and lived in the South-West among the descendants of the Covenanters. He was a peasant more in virtue of his prevailing themes than by his actual rank. Addressing every grade from the Prince of Wales to roadside tramps, the "annals of the poor" are dearest to the heart of one who was often by painful experience familiar with their sorrows. But Burns himself, save latterly as a government official, never did a day's work for others than himself and his family. His father's status as a tenant farmer in the Lowlands was equivalent to that of an English yeoman. His own position in society, in the lower section of the middle class, went with his education and his free spirit to make him as much at ease in the reception rooms of the aristocracy as in the lanes of Mauchline. Everything conspired to make him what he was, a national rather than a peasant poet. In one of the passages in which he almost petulantly resents the claims of rank, he speaks of his "ancient but ignoble blood." In the same spirit Beranger, answering those who "criticise the paltry de" before his name, rejoices in being "a very scamp of common stamp." But both were only half in earnest, and neither without some pride in their ancestors. Those of Burns can be traced at least to the later years of the seventeenth century, when they are found well settled in the Mearns. It is worthy of note that the poet's grandfather, inspired by a zeal which characterised his descendants, built the first schoolhouse in the district of his farm. His third son, William, born in 1721, continued to reside in Kincardineshire till 1748, when he migrated southwards as a gardener; in 1749 laying

out the Edinburgh meadows, and from 1750 onwards similarly engaged in Ayrshire, till, having taken a lease of seven acres in Alloway, he built on them, largely with his own hands, the "auld clay biggin" of two rooms, to which, in 1757, at the age of thirty-six, he brought home his bride, Agnes Brown of Maybole. In this house—now almost a Mecca to northern patriots—Robert, the first offspring of the marriage, was born on the 25th January 1759.

born 25. I. 1759.

For the little record left of the cottage life at Alloway, we are indebted to three sometimes conflicting authorities:—Burns' letter (vol. iv. 4-20) to Dr Moore (Aug. 1787); that addressed to Mrs Dunlop by his brother Gilbert; and the reminiscences of his tutor, Mr John Murdoch, a young man of rare accomplishments and sagacity, to whom during their childhood, and much to their profit, the education of the family was in large measure committed. The autobiographic sketch is a strange chequer of fancy, philosophy, and recklessness, written in the sunshine of success, crossed by the shade of afflictions and of follies, which the writer was simultaneously deploring and recommitting. It is written with great apparent candour, and with the author's constant force of style; the facts, often lighted up by brilliances of setting, are sometimes, it may be, magnified in the haze of imagination. From the blessing or bane of the excess of this faculty, Gilbert—the only other junior member of the family who in a rapid sketch calls for comment—was, in his maturity at least, singularly free. An intelligent and canny Scot of enlarged mind, he is studiously proper, respectable, and orthodox, speaking in one strain of "an atheist, a demagogue, or any vile thing." He is a more or less sympathetic apologist for his brother's weaknesses; but, in the interests of truth or of popular feeling, he more than once attempts to disenchant Robert's narrative of an element of romance. *E.g.* The poet attributes the family migration southward to political causes, describing his ancestors as "renting lands of the noble Keiths of Marischal," as having had "the honour of sharing their fate," and "shaking hands with ruin for what they

esteemed the cause of their King and their country." Elsewhere the same assertion reappears in verse :—

"My fathers that name have revered on a throne,
My fathers have fallen to right it ;
Those fathers would spurn their degenerate son,
That name should he scoffingly slight it."

Gilbert, on the alleged authority of a parish certificate, emphatically asserts that his father had "no concern in the late wicked rebellion." Between the romance of the elder and the caution of the younger brother we have, in this instance, no means of deciding. A variation of more interest appears in their diverse estimates of the character of William Burness himself. There is nothing in the poet's prose inconsistent either with the picture of the Cottar, or the noble epitaph ending with Goldsmith's line—"For e'en his failings leaned to Virtue's side." But of these failings Robert was far from being piously unconscious. "I have met with few," he says of his father, "who understood men, their manners, and their ways, equal to him ; but stubborn ungainly integrity and headlong ungovernable irascibility are disqualifying circumstances, consequently I was born a very poor man's son." Elsewhere he complains of being the victim of parental prejudice. Gilbert, on the other hand, always defends his father, saying, "I bless his character for almost everything in my disposition or habits I can approve." "He was proud of Robert's genius, but the latter was not amenable to controul," which indeed appears to have been the fact. Genius seldom is amenable to control : the same applies to dense stupidity. Murdoch, writing from London in later years, is lavish in expressions of love and veneration for his old employer, in whose two-roomed cottage, a "tabernacle of clay, there dwelt a larger portion of content than in any palace in Europe." "He spoke the English language with more propriety than any man I ever knew with no greater advantages. This had a very good effect on the boys, who talked and reasoned like men long before others. Oh, for a world of such . . . he was worthy of a place in Westminster Abbey." Allowing for the exaggerations of filial piety and tutorial gratitude, we

gather that William Burness was, on the whole, as Mr Carlyle describes him, a man worth going far to meet, of that force of character which rises into originality, with a thirst for knowledge and power of communicating it alike remarkable, but defective in tact; none farther from Macklin's Scotchman, for, instead of "booing," he was ostentatiously independent, manly to the core, and religious, with a softened Calvinism, expressed in his Manual of Belief (*vide* vol. iv. 341, and *seq.*), fond of speculation, within limits, and keen in argument. In person he was above common stature, thin and bent; in essence honesty incarnate. The secret of Scotland's greatness, says the *Times*, is oatmeal; a notorious champion of the Free Church says it is Sabbatarianism; a zealous Presbyter, that it is hatred of Prelacy. Does it not rely as much on the influence of a few men of such character as we have described? Murdoch's remaining recollections of the quiet household, of the father who bequeathed his proud, quick temper without the strong controlling will, of the mother from whom Robert inherited his bright eyes and love of song, of the precocious boys, the gravity of the future poet, and the gaiety of the douce farmer, of the early love of books, and the integrity common to them all, are our only reliable records of the life at Alloway, unless we refer to this period the "warlock and spunkie" stories of the old woman,—germs of the fancies that afterwards conjured up an eerie "something" on the Tarbolton road, and set the ruined kirk "ableeze" with the most wonderful witch dance in literature.

W. Burns

II.—*Second Period, Mount Oliphant,* 1766-1777. (*Æt.* 7-18.)

The happiest days of William Burness went by in the clay cottage. Henceforth, as before, he wrought hard, and practised, as he preached, economy, temperance, and perseverance, but the winds and tides of adversity were ruthless, and he played a losing game. Desirous of cultivating land on his own account, he obtained a lease of Mount Oliphant in

1765, and entered on residence in the following year. The sad story of the bad farm,—"with the poorest soil under cultivation," writes Gilbert in 1800,—of the scanty crops, the inclement seasons, the death of the kind landlord, and the insolent letters of the tyrannic factor, has been often told, best of all by Burns himself, whose character was, during these twelve years, largely formed under influences partly favourable, partly the reverse. At home the children continued to be trained up "in decency and order" by their father, who, with two exceptions—Robert's fortnightly study of French under Murdoch at Ayr, and some lessons in penmanship at Dalrymple—took upon himself the whole duty of their education. This was conducted by candlelight in the evenings when they had returned from their labour in the fields, special attention being paid to arithmetic as a secular, and exposition of the Scriptures as a religious basis. To these lessons was added the stimulating effect of the "good talk" in leisure hours with the few clever people of the neighbourhood—Mrs Burns, though much occupied with household matters, listening appreciatively—and the reading aloud of some play of Shakespeare or other classic. Books were William Burness' only luxury; he never ranked a love of them among the artificial wants he strove to discourage, and his well-chosen stock, acquired by the scant savings of the family, or placed at their disposal by the kindness of friends, was at starting the poet's greatest advantage. His earliest favourites were the "Vision of Mirza" and one of Addison's Hymns. Then followed the life of Hannibal, lent by Murdoch, and the history of Sir William Wallace, some years after borrowed from a village blacksmith. The first sent the boy strutting up and down the room in an excess of martial enthusiasm that was far from being one of the man's prevailing moods, breaking out genuinely in only three of his later songs. The second, doubtless the popular chap-book based on Blind Harry, poured into his veins the "Scotch prejudice" to which he owes so much of his hold over the somewhat self-sufficient race of which he is at once the censor and the trumpeter.

Burns was born, as Scott was born, before the age of the shrivelling criticism—"the spirit that says 'No'"—that has robbed us of Coriolanus and Tell, and damped half the fires of national fervour. "The greatest of the Plantagenets" was to him a bogie tyrant; the firer of the Barns of Ayr, a model of martyred chivalry; and in singleness of heart he chose a fine Sunday to worship in the Leglen Wood, visiting the fabled haunts of his "heroic countryman with as much devout enthusiasm as ever pilgrim did the shrine of Loretto." Among other volumes, borrowed or bought, on the shelves of Loan House were, besides good manuals and grammars of English and French (in which language he displayed remarkable proficiency), Mason's Extracts, a collection of songs, Stackhouse's History of the Bible, from which Burns picked up a fair amount of ancient history, a set of Queen Anne letters, on the study of which he began to write his own carefully and to keep copies of them, the Spectator, Pope's Homer and afterwards his other works, some of the novels of Richardson and Smollet, Ramsay, Hervey, with some plays of Shakespeare and essays of Locke. To these were added at Lochlea, Shenstone, Thomson, Fergusson, Mackenzie's "Man of Feeling," Tristram Shandy—which he devoured at meals, spoon in hand—with the Mirror, Lounger, &c., and later Macpherson's "Ossian" and Milton. A good library for a farm house even now, and, if scant as that of an author, Burns had mastered it. He drew blood from everything he read, *e.g.*, the style of some of his letters is affected by Sterne to a degree never enough remarked, that of others equally by the English essayists. Above all, he was saturated with the Bible and the Book of Songs, carrying them with him for spare moments in the fields, and lingering over them in his cold little room by night; "carefully noting the true, tender, sublime, or fustian," and so learning to be a critic, while stirred by emulation to become himself a lyrist. His first verses were inspired by a calf love—innocent prelude to many of various hues—for "Handsome Nell," his partner in the labours of the harvest during his

fifteenth autumn, the tones of whose voice made his "heart strings thrill like an Œolian harp." Save the song, "I dreamed I lay where flowers were springing," he wrote nothing more of consequence till six, and little till ten years later. His circumstances were fatal to precocious authorship. The father and sons were fighting bravely through their eleven lean years of struggle, ending in defeat; and were, with both physical and moral bad results, overwrought. Work on land, in the open air, is in itself more favourable to mental activity than the routine drudgery of a teacher or literary hack; but the labour to which the young Burnses were inevitably subjected was both excessive and premature. The poet was always a good and dexterous workman, "at the plough, scythe, or reap-hook he feared no competitor:" in the later days at Ellisland we have testimony to his being able at a push to "heave a heavier stone" than any of his "hands." But these early efforts were drawing on his capital and exhausting his fund of strength. At the age of thirteen he threshed the corn.

> "The Thresher's weary flinging tree
> The lea lang day had wearied me."

At fifteen he was the principal labourer. The family kept no servant, and for several years butcher-meat was unknown in the house. Unceasing toil brought Burns to his sixteenth year. His robust frame overtasked, his patience was overtried; despite bursts of buoyancy and the vague ambition which he pathetically compares to the groping of the blind Cyclops, his temper was often exasperated. His shoulders were bowed, and his nervous system received a fatal strain; hence long, dull headaches, palpitations, and sudden fits of hypochondria, with lurid lights from "the passionate heart," darting at intervals through the clouds. "Μελαγχόλικοι ἀει ἐν σφοδρᾷ ὄρεξει." Prosperity has its temptations, but they are nothing to those of the poetic temperament goaded by pain within, and chilled by apathy without. From toils which he associates with those of a galley slave, and the internal fire craving for

sympathy in a freer atmosphere than even that of his home, there sprung the spirit of revolt which soon made headway, and passed not only the bars of formalism, but the limits of rational self-restraint.

At this period, despite an awkward shyness and a morbid dread of ridicule, the poet's social disposition—"the hypochondriac taint" he calls it, that made him fly solitude—had led him to form acquaintance with companions in or near Ayr, some of whom had superior advantages, contemplated not without envy. "They did not know," he bitterly remarks, "enough of the world to insult the clouterly appearance of his plough-boy carcase." Two years after he had committed his first "sin of rhyme," Burns, if we accept his own chronology, spent the summer months at Kirkoswald, studying mensuration. Here he came in contact with some of the riotous scenes of that smuggling coast, took part in them, found himself "no enemy to social life," and learned "to look unconcernedly on a large tavern bill." Here also, when "the sun entered Virgo" (*i.e.*, in August) he encountered a premonition of his master spell in "a charming fillette," who, living next door to the school, set him "off at a tangent" from his trigonometry. Nothing came of the affair at the time, but several years later (1783) Burns renewed his acquaintance with the girl (Peggy Thomson), and from a rough former draft rewrote in her honour, "Now westlin' winds," etc. Following the same authority (his own) as to date, we must assign to the early winter of the same year an event by which the serenity of the domestic life—one phase of which is represented in the "Cottar's Saturday Night," the other in the "Twa Dogs"—was interrupted. This event was the poet's persistence, directly against his father's will, in attending a country dancing-school. The motive he assigns, a desire to give his manners a "brush," seems innocent enough; but the action was typical of his rebellion against the straiter rules of the Scotch moral creed, and is therefore of more importance than at first appears.

Nelly Kirkpatrick

Study of mensuration at Kirkoswald

Peggy Thomson

Dancing-school

It is admitted that, in reaction from the levities of later

Romanism, the reformed religion in the north was at first stamped with an excessive austerity, and that, in after days, the long fight of Presbyterian Calvinism with the Episcopalian Hierarchy helped to perpetuate the spirit in which Knox himself, though by no means so fanatical as many of his followers, regarded a ball at Holyrood as "the dance of the seven deadly sins." The overstrained moral code of the Puritans, laughed out by the Restoration, discarded as visionary by the common sense of the Revolution in England, survived in Scotland in connection with the penances of the Kirk, so familiar to the reader of Burns, and still lingers in police regulations more socially inquisitorial than those of any other civilised country. The attempt to "deal with" every form of human frailty as a legal offence may be laudable in design; in practice it is apt to generate hypocrisy, deceit, and even crime, as a means of escape from exposure. But the stricter party of the Scotch Kirk, during the eighteenth century, not content with publicly branding the sins, set its face against the amusements of the people; it tried to keep them not only sober and chaste, but constantly sombre, to close the theatres, to shut the barns, fine the fiddlers, and set their melodies to psalms. Under the most depressing circumstances, Nature will have her way. From the gloom of a stern creed within, of inclement skies without, the Scotch peasantry sought relief in vocal music, cultivated the more eagerly that instrumental was banished from the kirks, in whisky, and in dancing. The Reformation for two centuries in our country stifled the other arts, but not that of Rizzio. Music triumphed over the spirit of the creed of Calvin, as it is now encroaching on the precepts of Penn. The fire in the heart of the Scotch peasantry, unextinguished by all the dry ashes of the Catechism, found vent in love songs—many of those current before the coming of their great minstrel, of worse than doubtful taste—in which they are tenfold more prolific than the gayer French; in rural assignations, where passion too often set at nought the terrors of the cutty-stool, and in the village "splore," for which the dancing-school was a preparation. "This is," says Dr

Currie, in his liveliest passage, worth quoting as a comment on many of our author's poems, "usually a barn in winter, and the arena for the performers a clay floor. The dome is lighted by candles stuck in one end of a cloven stick, the other being thrust into the wall. Young men and women will walk many miles to these country schools, and the instant the violin sounds, fatigue seems to vanish, the toil-worn rustic becomes erect, his features brighten with sympathy, every nerve seems to thrill with sensation, and every artery to vibrate with life." Such was the scene from which William Burness wished to keep back the poet, and from which the poet would not be kept back. It is a wise thing to multiply innocent pleasures, the worst policy to restrict them. Unfortunately, in seeking an innocent pleasure, Burns was made guilty of a disobedience, and resented it by a defiance inevitable to his nature. In taking his first step to be the interpreter of a nation, he had to cease to be a dutiful son. He broke the bonds that would not stretch, and soon revelled in his freedom as a wild colt in a meadow. From this crisis, he began to find himself; his virgin bashfulness was too rapidly "brushed" away; his native eloquence gushed forth like a liberated stream; in every society he found himself the light of conversation and the leader of debate; and in his hours of leisure beyond the walls of his home, whether by a dyke-side or in an inn-parlour, was surrounded by admiring or astonished groups who confided to him their affairs of the heart, and obtained his assistance in their wooing. At this period, ere reaching "green eighteen," he himself began to manifest a precocious "penchant à l'adorable moitie du genre humain"—"My heart was completely tinder, and was eternally lighted up by some goddess or other." According to Gilbert, Robert "idealised his women perpetually:" but he was as fickle as Sterne, and through life found it easier to adore a new mistress than to put on a new coat: a versatility often characteristic of the poetic temperament.

III.—*Third Period, Lochlea,* 1777-1784. (*Æt.* 18-25.)

William Burness attempted to leave Mount Oliphant at the end of a six years' lease, *i.e.*, after a residence of five and a-half years, 1771; but, failing, remained five and a-half years longer, at the expiration of which he contrived to reserve means and credit to secure the tenancy of Lochlea, whither the family removed on Whitsunday 1777, and where, for the first three years of their occupancy, they seem to have fairly thriven. Of this space of time there is little record: to its close belong the poet's letters to Ellison Begbie—a young woman, understood to be the Mary Morrison of his song, to whom he paid his addresses with a view to marriage, but who, after seriously entertaining them, to his grave discomfiture, rejected his suit. In 1780 the brothers established a Bachelors' Club, in which a variety of social subjects were discussed, though under some restrictions, with sufficient freedom and zest to stimulate the ingenuity and sharpen the wits of the members. It appears that Robert, always ambitious of shining, prepared himself beforehand for the debates. The next year of his life was in more than one respect disastrous. Having been in the habit of raising flax on a portion of his father's ground, it occurred to him to go to Irvine to learn to dress it. For some time he attacked his new trade with heart and hope, and, if we may judge by the letter to his father of Dec. 1781, lived a strictly frugal and abstinent life: but as they were giving a welcome carousal to the New-Year (1782), the shop in which he had combined with one of his mother's relations, took fire, and Burns was left "like a true poet, without a sixpence." Smarting under this loss, feeling himself jilted at once by Ellison and by fortune, he went through the usual despairs, and resorted to the too common consolations. Meeting with others of the class of seafaring men he had encountered at Kirkoswald, his eloquence, raised to a feverish heat, shed a lustre over their wild thoughts and ways. By one of those, a Mr Richard Brown, whose romantic adventures captivated his fancy, he was now

for the first time—by how many not the last were hard to tell—led to "bound across the strid" of what is technically called virtue. We have here no space, had we inclination, to pry into the details of the story, nor the continual repetitions of it, which marked and marred his career. Home again with a troubled conscience, and a love for company unworthy of him, he found in the Masonic Lodge at Tarbolton an institution unhappily well-suited to his weakness for being first in every circle. In the festivals of that guild he could defy competition: the brethren, justly proud of their new deputy-master, joined with a right good will in the ballad of John Barleycorn, and shouted till "the kebars sheuk" over the chorus of "The Big-bellied Bottle." Nevertheless these years were not barren. Before going to Irvine, Burns had written "Ye Cessnock Banks" and "My Nannie O:" he brought back from it his early religious pieces, and the volume of Fergusson which first fired him with the definite ambition of being himself a poet.

Between 1781-83 were written the "Lament for Mailie," "Winter: a Dirge," "Remorse," and others in similar strain; also a number of songs, the best known being "The Rigs of Barley" and "Green grow the rashes." These were addressed to various objects; some former flames, as Kirkoswald Peggy, again flit across the horizon, others may have been imaginary. One might as well undertake to trace all the originals of Horace's or Herrick's fancy as those of Burns, for, when he became famous, even married women contended to have sat to him for their portraits. The passion in these songs is more lively than intense, their charm is in the field breeze that blows through them as freshly as in the days of Chaucer. A love for the lower forms of social life was the poet's besetting sin,—Nature his healing power. He was fortunate in being placed amid the scenes best suited to nourish a genius which fed on the meadows and glades round the bends of the Ayr, as a bee feeds on flowers, and had no affinity to mountain tops on the one hand, or to cities on the other. Living in full

face of the Arran hills, he never names them. He takes refuge from the ridges of Ben Goil and Ben Gnuiss among the woods of Ballochmyle, and in the spirit which inspired his "Mouse" and his "Daisy," turns out of his path, fearing to "disturb the little songsters of the grove." Similarly Chaucer, who travelled in Italy, names neither Alp nor Apennine. Each found his "cheer in the brightness utterly of the glad sun." The gloom of Burns was not by lonely tarn or "steep frowning summit," but in the snow-drift that starves the cattle on the lowland moor, and the winter wind that is like man's ingratitude. A country life saved him as far as he was saved; two seasons of a city made it stale to him, and he perished in a county town. With the sweetness of the fields came the benign influences of Coila, to which he thus refers:—"My passions, when once lighted up, raged like so many devils, till they got vent in rhyme, and then the conning over my verses, like a spell, soothed all into quiet." Here the lyrist of the last century anticipates the great mosaic-worker of the present—

> "But for the unquiet heart and brain
> A use in measured language lies,
> The sad mechanic exercise,
> Like dull narcotics numbing pain."

In 1783 the poet, beginning to realise the chances of his fame, commenced his first Common-Place Book, "Observations, hints, songs, scraps of poetry, &c"—it concludes October 1785, with a warning against his own errors (æt. 24-26). The second, begun April 9, 1787, ends August 1790 (æt. 28-31). They are both of considerable biographical and literary interest.

Meanwhile, at the farm affairs were kept going only by strict economy and hard labour, and when a dispute about the terms of the lease resulted in an adverse decision, it broke the old man's heart. He died (Feb. 13, 1784, æt. 63) full of sorrows and apprehensions for the gifted son, who wrote for his tomb in Alloway the famous epitaph, and afterwards applied to him the lines of Beattie—

"Is it for this fair virtue oft must strive
With disappointment, penury, and pain?"

Robert and Gilbert lingered at Lochlea for some time longer, but, when the crash came, they were only able, by claiming arrears of wages on their father's estate, to rescue enough to start in joint-tenancy at Mossgiel, about a mile from Mauchline, whither, about Whitsunday, they migrated with their mother and the rest of the family.

IV.—*Fourth Period, Mossgiel,* 1784-1788. (*Æt.* 25-29.)

The brothers entered on their new lease with brave hearts, Robert, in a resolute mood, calculating crops, attending markets, and determined, "in spite of the world, the flesh, and the devil, to be a wise man," but the results of bad seed the first year, and a late harvest the second, "overset" his "wisdom." The family seemed to flit from one mound in Ayrshire to another: their new abode also lay high, and the snow during four severe winters was deep on its cold wet clay: consequently the outcome was so scanty that they had to give up part of their bargain, and surrender some of their stock; but they had a kind landlord, to whom they were probably indebted for their ability to struggle on, and abandon the idea of another migration. No one has moralised better on "the uses of adversity" than Burns; few so finely as when he says that misfortunes "let us ken oursel':" yet none more prone, when the pinch came, to blame his evil star, and to seek shelter from the world's censure and his own under "overwhelming circumstances." We have, however, the direct testimony of Gilbert to his steadfastness in one important respect—"His temperance and frugality were everything that could be desired." The effect of prevalent misconception on this point is visible, even in Mr Carlyle's, in many respects, incomparable essay. The poet had at Kirkoswald and Irvine learned to drink, and he was all his life liable to social excesses, but it is unfair to say that "his character for sobriety was destroyed."

Most of his best work was done at Mossgiel, and in-

spired by the country around, or in Mauchline itself. This, the most suggestive of his haunts, has suffered less than most places from railway, or pit, or mine, or the importunity of professional showmen. A new road has been made through the quiet village, and a new steeple set in the midst of it without doing much to mar its homeliness. The Poet, whose renown beyond the Atlantic brought hither Nathaniel Hawthorne, still haunts the streets. Our eyes may yet rest upon the Priory, and on the Corse, where he found the girl who was his fate hanging up clothes to dry. We have access to the crib in the Back Causeway to which he brought her home, and to the alehouse of Nanse Tinnock. Whence, through the churchyard, by the graves of the twins and the Armours, of Daddy Auld and his "black bonnet,"—William Fisher,—of the good Gavin and the ill-fated Margaret Kennedy, between the site of Moodie's tent and the lunching booths of the Holy Fair, we come to that of Johnny Dow's "Arms," with its "roaring trade," and the windows from which the lovers beckoned across the lane. We pass on the other side to Poosie Nansie's howff, where "the vera girdle rang" with the wildest of vagrant revels, on which we can almost see Burns interloping with his cronies Richmond and Smith, or "setting up" the Cowgate with "Common-sense" Mackenzie, or loitering along the main with Lapraik and Kennedy. We picture him taking the east road, and coming over "the drucken steps" to the race-course, where (in April 1784 or '85, *v.* Vols. I. and IV.) he first met "the jewel" of the "six proper young belles;" and so back by the upland fields to watch the gloamin' growing grey over the Galston moors; or the south to Catrine, where he was entertained and recognised by Dugald Stewart; or another to the Whitefoords at Ballochmyle; or another to Coilsfield, "the Castle o' Montgomerie," whose banks and braes yet blossom with his name, to call on his early patron, afterwards the Earl, Sir Hugh. Lastly, we loiter down the Faille till it trickles into the Ayr, by a grove more poetically hallowed than the fountain of Vaucluse or Julie's bosque. There is no spot in Scotland so created for a modern idyll, none leaves us with such

an impression of perfect peace as this, where the river, babbling over a shelf of pebbles to the left, then hushed through "birch and hawthorn," and Narcissus willows, murmuring on, heedless of the near and noisy world, keeps the memory green of our minstrel and his Mary.

Burns's life during the years 1784-86 was mainly concerned with three matters—a keen religious controversy, the intimacy that resulted in his marriage, the full blaze and swift recognition of his genius.

The poet, brought up like his countrymen in the Calvinistic theology, was by nature and circumstance soon led to question and "puzzle" the tenets of his ancestors. Proud of his polemic skill, and shining "in conversations between sermons," he at Irvine, if not before, was familiarised with "liberal opinions" in speculation in connection with laxity in life; he continued to hold them in better company.

Ayrshire had been, for some time, the headquarters of a Theological Conservatism, often combined with Radical Politics; but, during this period, several of the pulpits were occupied by men affected by the wider views prevailing in the literary circles of the capital, where Polite Literature, seldom on close terms with Fanaticism, was represented by Robertson, and Blair, and Beattie, and Mackenzie. The clergymen of the "New Licht," or Moderate party, were, compared with their antagonists, men of "light and leading," learning and manners. They read more, wrote better, and studied their fellows from various points of view. Scholars and gentlemen, personally without reproach, they believed not only in good works, but occasionally in good cheer, made allowances for sins of blood, and were inclined to "gently scan their brother man, still gentler sister woman." The representatives of the "Auld Licht" party, on the other hand, were more potent in the pulpit. M'Kinlay and Moodie,—Black Jock Russell and Peebles, Father Auld, and Steven "The Calf," never shot over the heads of the people by references to Aristotle's Ethics or Cicero's Offices: they charmed the mob by the half physical excitement of vehement words and vulgar

action: knotty points of faith, which their opponents were apt to slur, they cleared at once "wi' rattlin' and wi' thumpin'," and when patrons, like Glencairn, being men of culture, began in their appointments to be influenced by the regard of like for like, they raised against them the cry of "Patronage"—

> "Come join your counsels and your skills
> To cowe the lairds;"

a cry, so well chosen in a democratic country that, despite Bacon's "exceptis rebus divinis," despite Burns's comment—

> "And get the brutes the power themsels
> To choose their herds,"

it has, after a century's fight, with results yet to be seen, carried the day. Few criticisms on the poet have done justice to his friends the Moderates. Liberal conservatives, with excessive "Economy," as is their wont, have passed the question by. The orators and pamphleteers of that offshoot of the Church, whose name is a masterpiece, almost a miracle, of misnomenclature, have been left free to rail at large at a body of men, on the whole, among the best of their age. Maligned as "mundane," because they looked on the round world as a place to live, not merely to die in; and held to be "coarse-minded" because they did not become hysterical, the historian will give them the credit of helping to keep the country sane. That these men appreciated, esteemed, and invited Burns to their houses has of course been lamented: even the philosopher and guide of John Sterling says the poet learned "more than was good for him" at the tables of the New Licht, but it is unjust to weight them, on the ground of unauthenticated anecdotes, with the responsibility of his already formed opinions. Accomplished Broad-Church clergymen may have pointed some of the arrows in his quiver, but it was the indecorum of his adversaries and loyalty to his friends that set them flying. By all accounts, his landlord, Gavin Hamilton, was of the salt of the earth, upright, genial, "the puir man's friend," himself in word and deed a gentleman; but he openly espoused

the liberal cause, and the Rev. Mr Auld, a person, says Cromek, "of morose and malicious disposition," having had a feud with Hamilton's father, sought every occasion of venting his spite on the son, whose child he refused to christen, for the following reasons:—Hamilton was seen on horseback and ordered his gardener to dig a few potatoes (for which the gardener was afterwards ecclesiastically dealt with) on the Lord's Day, he was heard to whistle on a Fast Day, and said "damn it" before Mr Auld's very face. High social position, stainless life and benevolence were as nothing against the fact that he played at cards, and on Sundays only went once to church; the straiter sect already regarded him with venomous looks. Robert Aitken, another staunch friend whose acquaintance Burns made at the Castle, and to whom he dedicated "The Cottar's Saturday Night," on similar grounds came in for his share of the same narrow virulence. The poet watching his opportunity, found it on one of the frequent occasions when the practice of those severe censors shamed their precept. Pecuniary differences are touch-stones of religious profession, and two shining Auld Licht divines, being at variance as to their parochial bounds, abused each other in open court, with more than average theological indecency.

"Sic twa—O do I live to see't,
Sic famous twa should disagree,
An' names like villain, hypocrite,
Ilk ither ge'en,
While new-light herds with laughin' spite
Say neither's lee'in."

In this wise, Burns struck from the shoulder, and seizing on Pope's lacerating lines—

"Blockheads with reason wicked wits abhor,
But fool with fool is barbarous civil war,"

launched at the Pharisees his "Twa Herds, or Holy Tulzie." By this piece, towards the close of 1784, his reputation as a satirist, next to that of a lyrist, his title-deed to fame, was made at a stroke. No wonder the liberals, whose weakness lay in lack of demagogic art, clapped their hands and drank

their claret with added relish "upon that day"! Here was a man of the people, speaking for the people, and making the people hear him, fighting their battle in a manner hitherto unknown among their ranks. The first shot fired, the guns of the battery rattled and rang, volley on volley. "Holy Willie's Prayer," with the Epistles to Goudie, Simpson, and M'Math, "The Holy Fair," besides "The Jolly Beggars" and the "Address to the Deil," inspired in part at least by the same spirit, were written in 1785. To the next year belong "The Ordination," the "Address to the Unco Guid," "The Calf," and the "Dedication to Hamilton,"—a sheaf which some of the admirers of the poet's softer mood would fain pluck out of his volume and cast like tares into the oven. They fail to perceive that, for good or ill, they represent as essential a phase of his genius as the lighter characters of the Canterbury Tales do that of Chaucer. Burns' religious satires are an inalienable part of his work; though, for some years after his Edinburgh success, the fire which prompted them smouldered, it sends out continual sparks in his letters, and three years later, on the prosecution of his friend M'Gill, it blazed into the fierce blast of "The Kirk's Alarm."

> "Orthodox, orthodox, wha believe in John Knox,
> Let me sound an alarm to your conscience;
> There's a heretic blast has been blawn in the West,
> That what is no sense, must be nonsense."

A keen adversary and unscrupulous controversialist admits that these lines, once sent abroad, cannot be suppressed by Bowdlerism. "Leviathan is not so tamed." No, nor can Michael's flaming sword be so blunted. It is hard to say what the writer might not have done for religious liberty in Scotland, had not the weight of his judgment been lessened, as the cogency of Milton's views on Divorce, by the fact that he was, in part at least, fighting for his own hand. Speculative opinion has less to do with some aspects of morality than is generally supposed; but it was unfortunate for the poet that, when the Kirk-Session of Mauchline

met to look over their artillery, they found, by his own confession, a weak point in his armour.

No biography of Burns can be complete that does not discuss with some detail the delicate matters connected with his relation to the other sex; but, in the slight survey to which we are confined, it must be enough to glance at the main facts and draw an inference. Philosophical moralists have, with considerable force, asserted that the root of all evil is selfishness; but in practice this takes two directions so distinct that they mark two distinct types of evil, the one exhibited in various forms of dishonesty, hypocrisy, meanness, or fraud; the other in incontinence of speech, of diet, or in relations of sex. In the worst type, *e.g.*, that of Richardson's Lovelace, that of the deliberate seducer and deserter, they are combined. The chaste commercial rogue, who gives tithes of his plunder, is, as a rule, too tenderly dealt with by the Church; the man—unfairly not the woman—who yields to every gust, is perhaps too tenderly dealt with by the World. Burns, it must be admitted, was in this respect emphatically "passion's slave," and yet a nation ostentatiously proud of its morality wears him in its "heart of hearts." He was more reckless in his loves than Lord Byron, almost as much so as King David; but he was never treacherous, and, in contrast with the sickly sentimentalist Rousseau, he never sought to shirk the consequences of his misdeeds. When accordingly, in November 1784, his "Dear bought Bess," the result of a liaison during the last days of Lochlea, made her appearance, she was hailed in "The Welcome" with a sincere affection, brought up in the family, and shared their fortunes. This event brought Burns within the range of ecclesiastical censure, which, considering that it was an established custom not to be waived out of respect even for the person of a poet, he too keenly resented. Shortly before or after, he was implicated in another affair with a more serious result. It is dogmatism to pretend certainty as to the date of his first meeting with his Jean, depending as it does on the original presence or interpolation of a stanza in

the Epistle to Davie; but only in the last month of 1785 must their intimacy have culminated. Mr Armour, a well-to-do master mason, and strict "Auld Licht," who hated freedom of thought and speech when combined with poverty, from the first set himself against the courtship as a prelude to an undesirable alliance. Burns was accordingly driven to contract a clandestine marriage by acknowledging the girl in writing as his wife; a form still valid. When, however, their relation was discovered, the incensed parents, with a disregard of her honour which forfeits their claim to our respect, persuaded her to destroy her "lines" and repudiate her bargain. By this step, assigned to April 13, 1786, and the transgressor's second appearance, July 9, on the bad eminence of the stool of repentance, with a view to obtain a certificate of bachelorship, both parties—mistakenly as lawyers now maintain—seem to have thought that the irregular alliance was annulled. The poet gave vent to his outraged feelings in "The Lament" and the last stanza of "The Daisy," and finding himself out of friends and favour, holding that "hungry ruin had him in the wind," gave up his share of the Farm, resolved to seek refuge in exile, and accepted a situation as book-keeper to an estate in Jamaica. The Armours, rejecting his overtures of reconciliation and threatening him with legal proceedings, put spurs to his intent; he hurried on the publication of his poems, and with the proceeds bought a steerage passage in a ship to sail from Greenock on the 1st September.

Jean Armour
Clandestine marriage
annulled

Burns expected a wife to go with him or to follow him; but it was not Jean. Nothing in his career is so startling as the interlineation of his loves; they played about him like fire-flies; he seldom remembered to be off with the old before he was on with the new. Allured by two kinds of attraction, those which were mainly sensual seem scarcely to have interfered with others of a higher strain. It is now undoubted that his white rose grew up and bloomed in the midst of his passion-flowers. Of his attachment to Mary Campbell, daughter of a Campbelton

sailor, and sometime nurse to the infant son of Gavin Hamilton, he was always chary of speech. There is little record of their intimacy previous to their betrothal on the second Sunday, the 14th of May 1786, when, standing one on either bank of the Faille, they dipped their hands in the brook, and holding between them a Bible,—on the two volumes of which half obliterated inscriptions still remain,—they swore everlasting fidelity. Shortly after she returned to her native town, where "Will you go to the Indies, my Mary?" and other songs were sent to her. Having bespoken a place in Glasgow for Martinmas, she went in the autumn to Greenock to attend a sick brother, and caught from him a fever which proved fatal at some date before October 12, when her lair was bought in the West Kirkyard, now, on her account, the resort of pilgrims. Mrs Begg's story of Burns receiving the news of her death has been called in question; but how deep the buried love lay in his heart is known to every reader of his verse. After flowing on in stillness for three years, it broke forth as the inspiration of the most pathetic of his songs—

Betrothal with Mary Campbell

"Thou lingering star with lessening ray,"

composed in the course of a windy October night, when musing and watching the skies about the corn-ricks at Ellisland. Three years later, it may have been about the same harvest time, even on the same anniversary, the receding past, with a throng of images, sad and sweet, again swept over him, and bodied itself forth in the immortal lyric—

"Ye banks and braes and streams around the Castle o' Montgomery,"

which is the last we hear of Highland Mary.

Meanwhile Burns had arrived at the full consciousness of being a poet, and, though speaking with almost unbecoming modesty of his rank, in comparison with Ramsay and Fergusson, had, by his own statement, as high an opinion of his work as he ever entertained. His fertility during the years 1785-86, more especially in the period between November 1785 and April 1786, has rarely been

equalled. Among the pieces conceived behind the plough, and transcribed before he went to sleep in his garret over the "but and ben" of the farm-house, in addition to his anti-Calvinistic satires, and Dr Hornbook, of more local interest, were "The Twa Dogs," "The Author's Prayer," "The Vision," and "The Dream," "Halloween," "The Farmer's Address to his Mare," "The Cottar's Saturday Night," The two Epistles to Davie and three to Lapraik, the lines to a Mouse and to a Daisy, "Scotch Drink," "Man was made to Mourn," and "The Jolly Beggars." These, with the exception of the last, along with some of his most popular songs, were included in his first volume. First Publication Preparations for publishing it at Kilmarnock began in April; it appeared on July 31st under the auspices of Hamilton, Aitken, and other of his friends. The result was an almost instant success, if not a thorough appreciation. Of an edition of 600, at the end of the month only 41 copies remained unsold. This epitome of a genius, so pronounced and so varied, expressing itself so tersely and yet so clearly—for there was not a word in the volume that any Scotch peasant who could read could fail to understand—took its audience by storm, and set all the shores of the West in a murmur of acclaim. It only brought to the author £20 direct return, but it introduced him to the literary world. Mrs Dunlop of Dunlop began with him the correspondence which testifies to a nine years' friendship. Dugald Stewart invited him to his house at Catrine, where he met Lord Daer, and found his first experience of the aristocracy a very pleasant one. Somewhat later H. Mackenzie gave him a favourable review in the *Lounger*, extracts from which were copied into the London papers. Of Stewart, Burns speaks at all times with affectionate respect; the philosopher bears as emphatic testimony to the favourable impression made by the first appearance of the poet, and to the high qualities of mind which he exhibited in their frequent walks together about the Braid Hills in the subsequent spring—to the independence of his manners, a consciousness of worth devoid

of vanity, and the fluency, precision, and originality of his speech. "He had a very strong sense of religion, and expressed deep regret at the levity with which he had heard it treated in some convivial meetings." "All the faculties of his mind were equally vigorous." "From his conversation I should have pronounced him fitted to excel in whatever walk of ambition he had chosen to exert his abilities. He was fond of remarking on character, shrewd, and often sarcastic, but extravagant in praise of those he loved. Dr Robertson thought his prose, considering his education, more remarkable than his verse."

From August till the middle of November, during which time he had written "The Brigs of Ayr," "The Lass of Ballochmyle," "Tam Samson's Elegy," and other minor pieces, preparations for the poet's departure were proceeding. On the 26th of September he writes to his Montrose cousin that it will not take place till after harvest; but, a month later, he is still bent on the Indies. Coming back over Galston Moor from a visit to that excellent Moderate (his friend, Dr Laurie of Loudon), he wrote "The gloomy night is falling fast," ending "Farewell, the bonie banks of Ayr."

In the interval, incited by Mr Hamilton to venture on a second edition, he was discouraged by the temerity of the Kilmarnock printer; but an enthusiastic letter, transmitted by Laurie, from the blind poet, Dr Blacklock, and the prospect of the support of the Earl of Glencairn, induced him to stay his steps and try his fortune in the Scotch metropolis. He who had sung "Freedom and whisky gang together," was not to be an overseer of slaves, but an exciseman. He left Mauchline on a pony on the 27th, and reached Edinburgh on the 28th November, with passports that promised him a fair start, in the "pastures new," on which he now, in his twenty-ninth year, broke ground.

V.—Fifth Period, Edinburgh, Nov. 1786-*May* 1788. (*Æt.* 28-30.)

In the northern capital of these days there was more of Auld Reekie, less of Modern Athens; the iron-road had not

replaced the Nor-Loch, the main thoroughfare ran down from the Castle to Holyrood, and the banks of the valley were undisfigured by domineering hotels or the College towers which have roused Mr Ruskin's wrath. The first sight of a city, moreover, is as attractive to a countryman, as the first glimpse of the sea to an inlander. We can easily imagine that the poet, attracted alike by the picturesque grandeur of the place and its historical associations, spent the first days after his arrival in wandering about the quaint old streets, looking into shop windows, rambling up Arthur Seat, and gazing over the Frith on the Lomonds. We can fancy him taking off his hat at the threshold of Allan Ramsay's barber shop, or seeking out the "narrow house" of Fergusson, in Canongate Kirk, and kneeling to kiss the sod on which he, at his own expense, erected the memorial to his neglected predecessor. But if he kept apart for a time from society, it was from choice not necessity; armed with introductions to Dr Blacklock and the Earl of Glencairn, the favour of Mr Stewart, and that of his amiable critic, Mr Mackenzie, secured, and the literary world of the place on tip-toe to see him, he soon became acquainted with Drs Blair and Gregory, Mr Fraser Tytler, Henry Erskine, Lord Monboddo (who had vaguely guessed what Mr Darwin is generally held to have proved), and his daughter, the fair theme of several of his minor verses. In short, before a week was over, he found himself, in his own words, suddenly "translated from the veriest shades of life" to the centre of the most distinguished circles. He was by the scholars of that brilliant time, by the bench and the bar, by fashion and by beauty, welcomed, courted, feasted, and admired. "The town," wrote Mrs Cockburn towards the close of the year, "is at present all agog with the ploughman poet. . . He has seen Duchess Gordon and all the gay world. His favourite for looks and manners is Bess Burnett, no bad judge indeed." It has been suggested that the sudden change of life must have been prejudicial to his health; but no man was ever less spoiled by adulation.

Lord Monboddo

When Burns first saw the mental and social aristocracy of the land, and they saw him, they met on equal terms.

"In the whole strain of his bearing," we are told, "he manifested his belief that in the society of the most eminent men of his nation he was exactly where he was entitled to be; hardly deigning to flatter them by exhibiting a symptom of being flattered." "I never saw a man," says Scott, "in company with his superiors in station or information more perfectly free from either the reality or the affectation of embarrassment. His address to females was extremely deferential, with a turn either to the pathetic or the humorous, which engaged their attention particularly. . . . He was much caressed in Edinburgh, but the efforts made for his relief were extremely trifling." With all his essential modesty, the poet must have felt a glow of triumph at the impression made by his matchless conversational power, according to Lockhart, who had the reports of auditors, "the most remarkable thing about him." The Duchess of Gordon said he was the only man who ever "carried her off her feet;" Ramsay of Ochtertyre, "I have been in the company of many men of genius, but never witnessed such flashes of intellectual brightness as from him, the impulse of his moment, sparks of celestial fire;" and the brilliant Maria Riddell, the best friend of his later days, "I hesitate not to affirm—and in vindication of my opinion I appeal to all who had the advantage of personal acquaintance with him—that poetry was actually not his *forte* . . . none have ever outshone Burns in the charm—the sorcery I would almost call it—of fascinating conversation. . . . The rapid lightnings of his eye were always the harbingers of some flash of genius. . . . His voice alone could improve upon the magic of his eye." The poet went home from assemblages of learning, wit, and grace, where he had been posing professors, arguing down lawyers, and turning the heads of reigning beauties, to share with his friend Richmond, then a writer's apprentice, a crib in Baxter's Close, Lawnmarket, for which they paid together three shillings a week. Not unfrequently he dropped in by the way upon gatherings of another sort, knots of boon companions met where the wine went faster and the humour was more akin to that of the

Tarbolton Lodge. For the chief of these free-thoughted and loose-worded clubs, nicknamed that of the Crochallan Fencibles, he afterwards compiled the collection of unconventional songs*—some amusing, others only rough—known as the "Merry Muses," to which he contributed a few pieces. Like Chaucer, he owed half his power to the touch of Bohemianism that demands now and then a taste of wild life. The English poet did not meet his Host or Miller among his fellow ambassadors, and the Scotch bard must often have left the company of Drs Blair and Robertson with an irresistible impulse to have his fling among the Rattlin' Willies of the capital, whose example possibly led him to form other connections of a kind to be regretted. But it is hard to see how this could have been prevented by any interposition of his high-class friends, or how, despite Scott's reproach, they could, at this stage, have done anything for the pecuniary relief of a man at once so wayward and so proud. They did him substantial service in facilitating the publication of his poems, and taking measures to ensure their success. Lord Glencairn introduced him to the publisher Creech, and got the members of the Caledonian Hunt to take 100 copies of the second edition. It appeared 21st April 1787, had nearly 3000 subscribers, and ultimately brought the author about £500; a sum which enabled him, besides handing over a handsome amount, £200, to his brother, to undertake several excursions, and, when the time came, to stock a new farm. This volume, containing most of the pieces in the Kilmarnock impression, with others, as the "Winter Night" (the sole important product of December 1786), was several times reprinted during his life. In the spring, Burns entered into an agreement to aid the engraver Johnson in his "Museum," to the six volumes of which—the last published shortly after his death—he gave about 180 songs. In September 1792 he was invited by Mr George Thomson to supply material for a similar work, the "Melodies of Scotland." On this undertaking also, he entered with

* Burns kept this volume under lock and key, and it was only printed, with doubtful propriety, for limited circulation, after his death.

alacrity, only stipulating that he should not be required to write in classic English, and contributed in all about 100 songs, wholly original, or so recast from older models as to make them really new.

The leisure of the last nine years of the poet's life—*i.e.*, from 1787 to 1796, was almost wholly devoted to these two enterprises; his other poetic performances being, with one exception, insignificant. Nothing was said about money, and his work was, in the one case entirely, in the other nearly, gratuitous. On the publication of his first half volume, Thomson, with a note of thanks, sent to Burns a shawl for his wife, a picture by Allan representing the "Cottar's Saturday Night," and £5. Such an acknowledgment of a treasure "above rubies" has provoked inevitable derision. It has been pleaded for Thomson that he had then only received an instalment of a tenth part of the work, that he was far from affluent, and that he put the whole of the songs at the disposal of Dr Currie, when, on the poet's death, that gentleman was about to edit an edition for the benefit of his family. At all events, Burns indignantly stopped any similar advance: he only forbears returning his correspondent's "pecuniary parcel" because "it might savour of affectation;" if he hears a word more of such "debtor and creditor traffic" he will "spurn the whole transaction;" his songs are "either below or above price." Whatever the "motif" of this letter—a point which his inconsistency in money matters, for he had not hesitated to dun Creech for his due, and his frequent irony, leaves doubtful—he abode by his determination never again to write for "cold unfeeling ore." In 1795, when requested by the editor of a high-class London newspaper to furnish weekly an article for the "poetical department" at a remuneration of £52 a year, he refused the offer. It is calculated that, including the profits of the re-issue of his poems in 1793, he had up to the date of his death received for the literary labour of fifteen years about £900; less than a third of the sum paid to Moore for "Lallah Rooke," but a hundred times the outcome to Milton of "Paradise Lost." Wisely, in any case, Burns

was never seduced by a popularity he feared to be evanescent, to think of literature as a means of livelihood. He adopted, by anticipation, the advice of Sir Walter Scott—never more apposite than now—" Let your pen be your pastime, your profession your anchor," and, with the idea of an independence at the plough-tail foremost in his mind, was already negotiating with Mr Patrick Miller of Dalswinton for a tenancy of a farm on the banks of the Nith. With a view to explore the ground, he on May 5th started on the Border tour, with his friend Ainslie of the Crochallans, of most of which we have in his journal a sufficient record. From other sources we learn that, on his return, he arrived at Mossgiel on the 8th of June. "O Robbie," his mother is said to have cried, as she met her son unannounced at the farm-house door. Enough has been said—sometimes rather rhapsodically—of an event so ready for rhetoric. The prodigal had gone into a far country and returned with a laurel crown. In the old homestead all was sunshine, no one suspects maternal tenderness or scrutinises fraternal praise; but the poet did not receive so graciously the civilities of his "plebeian brethren," who, nine months before, had taken the other side of the street, and were ready to hound him into exile. The adulation of success, which follows on insolence to calamity, is sure, on another turn of the wheel, to be again reversed; and Burns was all through the blare and blaze manfully conscious that his triumph was meteoric.

The old Armours were conspicuously deferential, and got the return they deserved in his expression of disgust at their "mean, servile compliance." With the daughter it was different, and he flew, as Professor Wilson naïvely expresses it, "too fervently to the arms of his Jean." After hovering for a few days about Mauchline, he, driven by a wandering impulse, or lured by the haunts of his lost Mary, rushed off on an expedition to the West Highlands, that has been called mysterious, because we have no record of it, save a few letters and an epigram composed at Inveraray, which shows, as might have been expected, that he did not find

the atmosphere of the metropolis of the Argyles congenial. After a month spent, on his return, in Ayrshire, we find him, early in August, back in Edinburgh, where the fame of his volume made him more a lion than ever in the circles of his former friends, and opened to him others. Unmoved by flattery or favour, he, in one respect only, betrayed a morbid self-consciousness. He was suspicious of being stared at, intolerant of condescension, and too nervously on his guard against the claims of learning or of rank. This feeling appears in the "Winter Night" and passages of the Common-place Book, in which he takes notes of the "characters and manners" as they rose around him. These pen and ink sketches are, on the whole, conceived in a spirit of friendliness, but they are also coloured by a cynical vein, and it is hardly to be wondered at that when extracts—of course the severest—began to be circulated, people did not feel envious of a place among them. There is little to add of the spring and summer of this year save a few records of the poet's impressionableness, generosity, and patriotic enthusiasm. In January he writes to Hamilton that he has almost persuaded a Lothian farmer's daughter to accompany him. In February he applied for and obtained permission to erect the tombstone over Fergusson. In March, answering Mrs Scott of Wauchope, he wrote the famous Epistle, with the well-worn lines beginning, "E'en then a wish, I mind its power," and sent some grateful verses to Glencairn, which, as appears, he did not obtain permission to publish. The memory of that accomplished nobleman rests securely on the stanzas afterwards inspired by the premature close (in 1791) of his generous life, "The bridegroom may forget the bride," than which there has been no finer tribute of genius to worth, since Simonides and Pindar exalted the fame of the kings of Syracuse. In April, in course of a Prologue for the benefit of the veteran Scotch Roscius (Mr Wood), Burns, after referring to Hume, Robertson, and Reid, as glories of Caledonia, perpetrated his worst criticism—

> "Here Douglas forms wild Shakspeare into plan,"

and in May, writing to Mr Tytler of Woodhouselee on the "Vindication of Mary Stuart," his worst lines—

> "Though something like moisture conglobes in my eye,
> Let no one misdeem me disloyal."

On the 25th, he started with the schoolmaster Nicol, another Crochallan, on a three months' tour in the Eastern Highlands, in the course of which he visited Queen Mary's birth-room at Linlithgow, the tomb of Sir John the Græme at Falkirk, the Carron Works,—which he compared to the mouth of the Pit,—Bannockburn, scrawling on the window of the inn at Stirling the dangerous stanza spread abroad to his harm,

> "The injured Stuart line is gone," &c.,

Strathallan, suggesting the lament, "Thickest night around me dwelling," Dunkeld, Birnam Hill, Aberfeldy, and the ducal residence at Blair, where he met Mr Graham of Fintry, and gave the toast, "Athole's honest men, and Athole's bonnie lassies." They passed through Rothiemurchus and Aviemore by Strathspey to Findhorn and Castle Cawdor, then over Culloden to Forres and Shakespeare's witch muir. We next find the poet entertained at Castle Gordon,—an event commemorated in some of his most graceful English verses,—and hurried away by the jealous impatience of his companion, then returning by Aberdeen (where he met some of his relatives and Bishop Skinner, son of the author of "Tullochgorum," which he extravagantly pronounced the best of Scotch songs): we trace him through Montrose to Perth and up the Almond Water, looking for the scene of "Bessie Bell and Mary Gray," and so by Kinross and Queensferry to Edinburgh. Ere the month was out he made, with Dr Adair, a fourth excursion, the main point of interest in which is his residence at Harvieston, and intimacy with Miss Margaret Chalmers, to whom he in vain offered his hand. On the same occasion he made the acquaintance of Mr Ramsay of Ochtertyre on the Teith, knelt on Bruce's grave in the Cathedral of

Miss Chalmers

Dunfermiline, and then, "from grave to gay," having persuaded Adair to sit on the stool of repentance, administered to him a parody of his own rebuke. At Clackmannan he was knighted by an ancient lady with the sword of her ancestor, the good King Robert, and nothing loath, responded to her toast, "Hoolie uncos"—*i.e.*, "Awa' Whigs, awa'."

Burns refers to his Highland trip in particular as "perfectly inspiring," but its only poetic outcome of much consequence was "Macpherson's Lament," the death-song of a freebooter (recalling that of Regnar Lodbrog), on the wild grandeur of which Mr Carlyle has eloquently dwelt. The fact that these expeditions yielded so little direct harvest may be explained in part by the business purpose of the first, and the ill-adjusted companionship of the third; more by the prodigious productiveness of the two previous years, and the social excitement of the six preceding months. The soil on which rich crops grow must sometimes lie fallow. Add that the spirit of poetry bloweth where it listeth, that to a mind of emphatically spontaneous power the fact of being expected to write was a bar to inspiration, that Burns, unlike Scott, only took delight in fine scenery as a frame to living interests, and we scarcely require to consider the fatigues of travel in the days when a sturdy lexicographer's journey to the Hebrides was a matter of more adventure than is now that of a lady to the Rocky Mountains or the Sandwich Isles.

Back in Edinburgh, the poet shifted to more comfortable quarters in St James' Square, where he lived with Mr Cruikshank, whose sister is the Rosebud of his Muse. daughter ? The rest of the year was mainly devoted to negotiations with Johnson, letters about the "Erebean fanatics," who were persecuting Hamilton and M'Gill, and stray verses addressed to Peggy Chalmers. On December 8, thrown from a hackney coach, he sustained an injury serious enough to lay him aside for six weeks, during which he expresses despairing disgust of life, and describes himself as "the sport, the miserable victim of rebellious pride, hypochondriac imagination, agonising sensibility, and Bedlam passions."

Poetic natures are rarely stoical, and a man accustomed to walk the fields in the morning, to blaze in society at night, naturally chafes under confinement with a disabled limb. Burns was besides beginning to smart from the fickleness—none the less that he had anticipated it—of "Fortune beguiling." His day of "grace, acceptance, and delight" had passed its noon. The town had had its fill of the prodigy, and the sough of the Reminiscences made the doors of the great move more slowly on their hinges.

The proud poet in later days, when the castle grew cold, sought solace in the "howff," now he frequented the Crochallans, or wandered about the crags. He had been foiled in one love-suit, and was prosecuting another under difficulties. Our space will only permit us to sum the evidence bearing on this strange story. On December 7th, Burns, at the table of a common friend, met Mrs M'Lehose, a lady whose husband had gone to the West Indies and left her with limited means to bring up two children in retirement in Potterrow. Handsome, lively, well read, of easy manners and a ready wit, a writer of verses sentimental and yet ardent, she was born in the same year as Burns, and told him that she shared his dispositions, and would have been his twin-brother had she been a man. Two such beings were obviously made for one another, and they lost no time in finding it out. The above-mentioned accident having prevented their taking tea together, on the following day he received her condolences with rapture. If he was, as lawyers maintain, at this time a married man, he did not know it: she was aware that she was only a grass-widow, and she was virtuous. Their correspondence must therefore be conducted with discretion, and "friendship," not "love," must be their watchword. How to reconcile the pretence with the reality was the trouble. Let them take the names of Clarinda and Sylvander, and exchange their compliments with the pastoral innocence of shepherd and shepherdess in the Golden Age. So it went on, letters flying to and fro, like carrier pigeons, then greetings from windows, visits, risks, recoilings, fresh assignations, reproaches and reconcilia-

Mrs M'Lehose

tions, wearisome to us, alternately tantalising and alluring to the mutually fascinated pair. It is perhaps impossible to get at the absolute truth in this business, and, if conjecture errs, it ought to be on the side of charity. One point has been now made plain, it was no case of mere philandering. Beneath all Clarinda's verbiage there throbs the pulse of a real passion, afraid of itself, and yet incapable of surrendering its object. She knew that she was playing with edge-tools, but she had confidence in the strength of her principles to draw the line. Sylvander writes more like an artist, never with so much apparent affectation as in many of those letters—fustian and bombast they often are, but as to their being falsetto is another matter. On all that Burns wrote there is some stamp of the same strong mind; but he was capable of moulding his style on that of his correspondents, and adapting his sentiments to theirs to such a degree as often to contradict himself. When we compare his letter of the 2nd March to Mrs M'Lehose with that of the 3rd to Ainslie, we are tempted to apply to the former his own line, "'Tis a' finess in Rob Mossgiel." But this plastic faculty, the actor's power, the weakness of over-sympathetic or electric natures, is wrongly confounded with deliberate deceit; it is an invariable accompaniment of dramatic genius, which takes its colour from what it works in, "like the dyer's hand." The poet's religious moods were as genuine as those in which he led the chorus of Crochallan: the former were elicited by contact with religious people; but he never, even to them, pretends to be orthodox; he is constantly fighting with Clarinda's Calvinism, and trying to undermine her confessor, Kemp. It therefore by no means follows that, in his offer to meet her "at the Throne of Grace," he was playing the hypocrite: if he did so, it was the worst thing he ever did.

Howbeit, this love-making was his main occupation, till, in February, he had news from Mauchline which naturally distressed and seems less naturally to have surprised him. Jean was again about to become a mother, and this time her father had turned her out of the house. Burns, of course,

rushed to the rescue, established her in the neighbourhood with the comforts essential to her condition, and succeeded in reconciling her to her mother ; but he was at first incapable of shaking off the spell of the syren, and wrote to Clarinda the somewhat heartless letter about the "farthing candle" and "the meridian sun,"—the former being the woman who was little more than a month later to become his wife, and to be through good and ill report the faithful and forbearing helpmate of the remaining eight years of his life. On February 25th he went to Dumfriesshire and took the farm of Ellisland. "A poet's choice," said Allan Cunningham's father, "Foregirth had better soil ;" and perhaps the views of the Nith had something to do with it. The lease was signed March 13th, the day on which Jean's second pair of twins are supposed to have made their appearance. They, however, only survived a few weeks. On the 17th Burns returned to Edinburgh, and on the 22nd had a farewell meeting with his "divine poetess." This, says one narrator, "was the last of the serio-comic episode of Clarinda." It is hardly so ; the episode, more serious than comic, had an epilogue ; the correspondence continued intermittently, and the renewal of their intimacy after more than three years of domestic life, resulted in at least one immortal verse.

The poet left Edinburgh on the 24th, having arranged with his publisher, and sent, as we have seen, a share of his profits to Gilbert. He had also applied to Mr Graham for a place in the Excise, the duties of which he hoped to combine with those of a farmer in the same district. His name being placed on the list, he was afterwards appointed to a post of £50 (raised in course of time to £70) a year, which he congratulates himself on having obtained without any hanging on or mortifying solicitation. On the 26th he was in Glasgow, on the 30th riding over the moors between Galloway and Ayrshire. It has been conjectured that he may then have come to the resolve to throw over his poetical grass-widow, and do his duty by the comparatively illiterate girl who for him had given up everything. A letter to Miss Chalmers, April 6th, is however, our first distinct intimation of

this resolve. On the 28th he admits to his old friend, James Smith, that he has made another irregular marriage. It was afterwards (May 2nd) solemnised in the house of Gavin Hamilton, as a Justice of the Peace, and on August 2nd solemnly confirmed at the annual communion in Mauchline, when both parties were reprimanded, expressed regret for their conduct, and "Mr Burns," by way of fine, "gave a guinea for the poor." Jean did not sign her name, so her husband did it for her; but only six weeks later he "acknowledges her letter," so the non-signature must have been due to nervousness. In frequent references to the event (especially that about the Synod in his heart) the poet takes too much credit for his conduct, but he always adds that he expects to have no reason to regret it. "I can fancy how, but I have never seen where, I could have made it better," is his rather ungracious refrain. In a note to Miss Chalmers on the 16th, he says that his wife had read nothing but the Bible and his verses (in singing which he often praises her voice), but that his marriage had taken him "out of villainy." Clarinda, however, was of an opposite opinion, and on the news wrote a furious letter, calling Burns "a villain;" an accusation to which, in a dignified reply of March 1789, he refuses to plead guilty, being "convinced of innocence, though conscious of folly." There appears, we must confess, more of the latter than the former in the whole extraordinary story, the sum of which is that the poet had entangled himself with two women, and married the one he loved least, but to whom he was far the more deeply bound.

VI.—*Sixth Period, Ellisland, July* 1788-*October* 1791. (*Æt.* 30-33.)

Burns left Edinburgh emphatically for good. His first winter had been, like Byron's one brilliant London year, over roses all the way; in the second he had to walk on withered leaves. His old temptations had led him into trouble, even threatened to harden his heart, and some of his great friends were doing their best to corrupt his taste.

The criticism of the eighteenth century is by no means so contemptible as it is the fashion to represent it; the English of Robertson, even the Latinised style of Blair, was better than the simpleton Anglo-Saxonism of recent antiquarians; but it was not the manner of writing proper to Burns, and their square and rule were ill-adapted for the measurement of his wood-notes. When a man adopts a style unnatural to him, he adopts its most exaggerated or degenerate forms; when the author of the "Jolly Beggars" tried to mimic the verse of Pope, the result was a reproduction of Hayley. When he expressed to Clarinda his belief that "the soul is capable of inflammation," he reminds us not of Steele but of the Della-Cruscans; he deserves a place in the "Loves of the Triangles," when he "conglobes a tear." His metaphors are often laboured; his allegories of "wisdom dwelling with prudence," etc., are lame travesties of the "Vision of Mirza." The dedications, acknowledgments, and other letters of the period have the same taint. In writing to Lords Buchan and Eglinton he is not at his ease, as he would have been in conversation with them. It seems unnecessary to inform the one that he is incapable of mercenary servility, and when he gratefully remembers the honour of a suggestion from the other, which he inly ridiculed, we feel how near affectation may approach to insincerity. Burns only escaped the latter vice by timely rescue from an atmosphere that was becoming unwholesome, and which no high and most probably unsuitable alliance could have made otherwise. Burns had all the "honest pride" of which he says too much, and would stoop for neither smile nor favour; but, to humour the great people at their dances, he wore a thin mask, and painfully went through a minuet with hob-nailed shoes. How bad the spoken criticism of his censors must sometimes have been, we may judge by some of the specimens which have been printed—*e.g.*, Dr Gregory's rejection of "The Lass of Ballochmyle," and his "swashing blows," beating the last bit of life out of the poet's untimely wounded hare; Dr Moore's recommendation to avoid the use of the Scotch dialect; Dr Blair's refusal to allow "Tam o' Shanter"

to be printed for the benefit of his family as an appendix to the remains of Michael Bruce ; and George Thomson's suggestion that "Welcome to your gory bed" be softened into "Welcome to your honour's bed," are amongst the most ludicrous in literature. True genius seldom wants advice ; but the habit of offering it is with some as inveterate as that of gambling or drink. Fortunately Burns seldom paid much heed to the cavils of men who "spun their thread so fine that it was neither fit for warp nor woof," and though, from good nature, he sometimes permitted his verses to be spoiled, on afterthought, a better judgment generally restored them. In his fragment of a Scotch Dunciad, "The Poet's Progress," he calls critics "those cut-throat bandits on the paths of fame," and his reception of Allison's "Essay on Taste," proves that on occasion he could turn and bite the biters. On perusing this politely dressed model of conclusive irony, Stewart innocently remarks on the mastery of the laws of association shown by the poet.

The lease of Ellisland ran from Whitsunday, but Burns did not take possession till the middle of June. His time till the end of autumn was occupied in getting ready the farm, and rushing backward and forward over a distance of forty-five miles, between Dumfriesshire and Mauchline, where his wife continued to reside. Present or absent, his dominant feelings during this honeymoon, lengthened by interruption, was that which inspires one of his most deservedly popular songs, "Of a' the airts the wind can blaw." When alone, he was a prey to many moods, for solitude never suited him, and his first impressions of the Nithsdale folk were unfavourable. "Nothing flourishes among them," he exclaims, "but stupidity and canting; they have as much idea of a rhinoceros as of a poet," and "their whisky is rascally." Ere the month was over he had, however, opened up friendly relations, only interrupted near the close of his life, with the Riddells of Glenriddell, and had written the well-known verses in Friars' Carse Hermitage, conceived in a spirit of Horatian content. About the same time, he was giving an appreciative study to Spenser, and to Dryden's

Dryden

Georgics of Virgil, criticising amateur verses with which he now began to be pestered, writing a remonstrance to the *London Star* against the anti-Jacobite demonstrations at the centenary of the "Glorious Revolution," and sending to Blacklock his ideas of a model wife, whose "head is immaterial in comparison with her heart."

In the first week of December he brought Mrs Burns to "the Isle," a steading a mile down the Nith, where they remained for about seven months, till everything was ready to enable them to move up to Ellisland. Now, if ever, were the poet's halcyon days. He had to all appearance found a quiet haven, a good landlord, a promising farm, and a loving helpmate. He could look forward to rearing his own crops, walking over the fields, or loitering by the river banks, enjoying his own thoughts and setting his new words to old tunes. Master of his surroundings, he hoped at last to be master of himself: his elastic temper let him put by the shadows of the past, and he brought into mid-winter the spirit of the spring. His songs of this period are marked by a more genuine buoyancy than either before or after. Beginning with the defiant little lilt, "I hae a wife o' my ain," he quickly followed it by two of his most famous lyrics, "Auld Lang Syne," in which he turned a tame original into the national song of peaceful, as "Scots wha hae" is of warlike, Scotland; and "The Silver Tassie," beginning, "Go fetch to me a pint of wine," a drinking song with the aroma of Lovelace[1] or Herrick.[2] Burns had set before himself a model domestic life, and for a time maintained it. He helped Mr Riddell to establish a public library, had family worship after his fashion, and went to church for example, though he found Mr Kilpatrick rather "drouthy." Respected by his servants, esteemed by his neighbours, beloved at home, his ambition was to act up to his verse, and "make a happy fireside clime for weans and wife."

Lovelace (1618-1658)
Herrick (1591-1674)

The new year 1789 opened brightly: on the first day he wrote to Mrs Dunlop one of his longest and finest letters. Soon afterwards an angry gust has recorded itself in the

outbreak of ferocity, "Dweller in yon dungeon dark," provoked by his being turned out of a roadside inn on a bitter night, to make way for the pompous funeral cortège of Mrs Oswald. Burns was a dangerous person to offend, and the quarrelsome lads of the district did well to hold their peace when he threatened to "hang them up in sang like potatobogles." He was a good disciplinarian, and, while generally indulgent to his servants, came down heavily on dense stupidity or obvious neglect. About Midsummer his delight in chastising wrong-doers found vent in smiting the Philistines with "The Kirk's Alarm," a ringing blast about which he seems to have taken some trouble, one among numerous comments on his theory of literary work. "I have no great faith in the boastful pretensions to intuitive propriety and unlaboured elegance. The rough material of fine writing is certainly the gift of genius; but I as firmly believe that the workmanship is the united effort of pains, attention, and repeated trial." It would have been well had this passage been impressed on the minds of his imitators, of whom the first of too many crops had begun to appear. "My success," he complains, "has encouraged such a swarm of ill-spawned monsters to crawl into public note under the title of Scotch poets that the very term Scotch poetry borders on the burlesque." During the whole of this period Burns was actively engaged on the farm, taking his full share of hard work, and maintaining perfect sobriety; but he found leisure to write several songs, among them, "John Anderson my Jo," and a number of letters from which an anthologia of his wit, wisdom, and tenderness might be constructed. The series addressed to his brother William would be amusing were it not for its closing in about a year with a record of the poor lad's death among strangers. "Form good habits," and, above all, "learn taciturnity," is the refrain of advice which this comparatively commonplace member of the family must have found it as easy as his monitor found it impossible to follow. Towards the close of July the Excise appointment was conferred, and, shortly after, the family left the Isle for Ellisland, where

(August 18) Francis Wallace, the second son, made his appearance, and about the same time Robert, the eldest, now three years old, was brought from Mauchline. The few notable incidents of the succeeding months are familiar in connection with the verses to which they gave rise. A September meeting with Nicol and Masterton at Moffat was the inspiration of "Willie brewed a peck o' maut;" the "mighty claret shed" at Friars' Carse, in October, of the famous "Whistle." Mr Douglas seems to have made out that Burns on that occasion was present only in spirit, not in body; but the fact that the verses must have been written five days after "Thou lingering Star" has not failed to evoke comment on the rapidly shifting moods of the Borealis race, of which he was a consummate type.

Round the dawn of 1790 clouds began to thicken. Ellisland was after all proving as profitless in the poet's hands as Lochlea or Mossgiel. Whether it was owing to want of skill—want of energy it was not—or a luckless choice of soil and situation, he was, as a farmer, destined to one chagrin after another, and had to fall back on his "second line of defence," the Excise, a defence unfortunately exposed to the attacks of enemies from within. There was undoubtedly some irony in his choice of a profession, of which no one was so sensible as himself. He refers to it fitfully in mocking verse and serious prose, now fearing the "Parnassian queans" will disdain him, now manfully asserting, "I would rather have it said that my profession borrowed credit from me than I from my profession;" again complaining that the extent of his ten parishes, compelling him to ride some 200 miles a week, is a strain on his strength. Documentary evidence, especially that recently made public, demonstrates that, during the seven years of his service, he discharged his duty to the Crown admirably well, and under trying circumstances, with the utmost possible consideration and humanity. The stale text "Suaviter in modo, fortiter in re" was never more apt. In dealing with poor old women and other retailers on a small scale of "home-brewed," he strained the law in their favour, and sometimes

gave them timely warning. On the other hand, he was so severe on hardened offenders that in one year his decreet perquisites reached the maximum known in the district. The evil of his new business was that it led him to spend so much of his time from home, and to mix so much in questionable society. Towards Midsummer he was prone to linger in Dumfries at the Globe Tavern, where a "guid willie waught" was not the sole attraction. The landlady's niece, a certain Annie Park, was, we are told, thought beautiful by the guests when they were in a state that made them tolerant in matters of taste. With this Annie of "the gowden locks," the poet contracted an intimacy that inspired what he himself regarded as the best love song he ever composed, "Yestreen I had a pint of wine," and resulted in the birth (March 31, 1791) of his second Elizabeth. The mother, being no more heard of, is supposed to have died. The child was first sent to Mossgiel, and then brought to Ellisland, to be nursed by the much-enduring Jean along with her third son, William Nicol, born just ten days later. Burns had again broken loose: "the native hue of his resolution" was blurred over by the red fires of passion, when, in a defiant mood, he threw off the stanzas beginning, "I murder hate," and ending with a notable proof of his Biblical knowledge. In other directions he was wasting his genius on election ballads, on prologues and addresses for the local theatre, and on furious prose execrations against the Puritans, the Edinburgh police, and things in general. But his genuine inspiration—though he complains of the Muse's visits being "short and far between"—had not deserted him. July gave birth to the elegy and epitaph, among the finest in the language, on Mathew Henderson. In September Captain Grose, an antiquarian Falstaff to whom he had been introduced at Friars' Carse (the subject of one of the poet's most good-humoured epigrams, and of the lines, "Hear Land o' Cakes and Brither Scots"), having got from him three traditionary stories of Alloway Kirk, recommended Burns to put them into verse. The result was "Tam o' Shanter" thrown off in one day's walk along the Nith, in an ecstacy, as Mrs.

Burns narrates; but matured into its published form during the three succeeding months. Of this period there are extant several records of friends or strangers who came to visit him; among them the pleasant pastoral of Ramsay of Ochtertyre with the quotation, "uxor Sabina qualis," and that of two English gentlemen who found him angling with a fox-skin cap on his head, and a broadsword hanging from his belt.* The next year is marked by little of note, save three instances of the poet's generous sympathy,—his interest in the publication of Bruce's poems, his Ode for the coronation of James Thomson's monument at Ednam, and his interposition in favour of the schoolmaster, Clarke, threatened with dismissal for severity to his boobies—an interference which seems ultimately to have been successful. During the summer Burns had four disabling falls from his horse; but he produced the elegy on Miss Burnet, the lament for Glencairn, the Banks of Doun, "Bonnie wee thing" in honour of Miss Davies, and began to celebrate, under the name of Chloris, a Miss Jean Lorimer, who from this date till the close of 1795 was his reigning beauty. He wrote besides several letters and some Jacobite songs, the chief of which, "Farewell thou fair day, thou green earth, and ye skies," was a favourite of the poet Campbell. Currie says it is "a hymn worthy of the palmy days of the Grecian muse." At midsummer, Burns had determined to leave his farm, and, the roup of the stock having been effected in September, the family flitted to the headquarters of the rest of his life, Dumfries.

Bruce

Jean Lorimer

VII.—*Seventh Period, Dumfries,* 1791-1796. (*Æt.* 33-37.)

a. *The Wee Vennel* (*Bank Street*), *Oct.* 1791-*May* 1793
b. *The Mill Vennel* (*Burns Street*), *May* 1793-*May* 1796.

Poets have thriven among the hills, nowhere else could Wordsworth, or amid the turmoil of a city, nowhere else

* Mr Carlyle does not credit this story, but it is fairly well authenticated.

could Pope have found his inspiration; the atmosphere of a county town is fatal to them. Dumfries, at the close of last century, was, by all accounts, a bad type of its class: the majority of its industrious inhabitants found relief from the drudgery of their trades in the small gossip of their limited society; the loungers went "black-guardin" through the streets, or rioting in taverns. In this headquarter of scandal and dissipation Burns's course was almost inevitably downwards. His whole history was a struggle between the loftiest aspirations, the most refined humanities, and temptations which his will was seldom strong enough to resist. During his last five years, his official duties compelled him constantly to ride in all weathers over moor and vale in search of illicit distilleries, and come into close contact with their contents. His genius opened to him the doors of castle and of cot; in the latter, he was exposed to rural hospitality; in the former, to the demands of the company gathered to wonder at his wit, and rejoice to find it flow freer with the wine. "They would not thank me," he said of the squires and lairds, "if I did not drink with them. I have to give them a slice of my constitution." Thousands of professing Christians, leading far worse lives, have found shelter in obscurity; but, when a great man yields, it is proclaimed on the house-tops and cried in the market.

The early records of his residence are full of forebodings. His income was inadequate for his growing family, and he began to have reason to complain of the coldness of patrons. "The rock of independence," of which he was wont to talk, was overhung with clouds lit by the meteors of French Revolutionism. In Nov. 1791 he bitterly writes to Ainslie, "My wife scolds me, my business torments me, and my sins come staring me in the face." It is at this period that Clarinda again flashes with a vivid lustre across the scene. Their intermittent correspondence thickened, and, towards the close of November, he went to Edinburgh, and spent a week mainly in her company. To their farewell meeting, on the 6th December, there are several fervent allusions. From Dumfries on his return, we have on the 15th: "This is the sixth letter

that I have written since I left you, my ever beloved." Shortly after, he sends the verses, "Ae fond kiss and then we sever," with the quatrain,

"Had we never loved sae kindly,
Had we never loved sae blindly,
Never met, or never parted,
We had ne'er been broken hearted,"

which, quoted by Byron, admired by Carlyle and Mr Arnold, is the quintessence of passionate regret. More than a year elapsed, during which Mrs M'Lehose had gone to the Indies, and, finding her husband surrounded by a troop of small mulattoes, had come back again. Then more letters passed, the final one preserved being from the poet, dated Castle Douglas, 25th June 1794, in which he professes to be perplexed as to the manner in which he is to address her; "the language of friendship will not suffice," &c. Then he reflects on the fickleness of fame; "she does not blow her trump now as she did." "Yet," he adds, "I am as proud as ever, and wish in my grave to be stretched to my full length, that I may occupy every inch of ground I have a right to." Here—not in the rendezvous of March 1788—closes the episode of Clarinda, unless we bring together two later references that originally lay far apart. One is from a letter of the poet to Mary Peacock, the friend in whose house the lovers first met, of date 6th December 1792. "This eventful day recalls to my memory such a scene. Heaven and earth, when I remember a far distant person." Then he gives the song

"Ance mair I hail thee thou gloomy December,"
. . . . . .
"Parting wi' Nancy, Oh, ne'er to meet mair."

The other is found in a leaf of an old woman's diary of 1831 on the same anniversary, "This day I can never forget. Parted with Burns in the year 1791 (forty years ago) never more to meet in this world. Oh, may we meet in heaven!" *Μεῖξον ἢ κατὰ δάκρυα.* The writer survived till 1841, reaching the age of 82.

In Burns's miscellaneous correspondence of this period there is little of conspicuous interest. The early stage of his intimacy with Maria (wife of Walter Riddell of Woodley Park), a brilliant West Indian of nineteen, at whose house he was for two years a frequent guest, is marked by an introduction of her book to his Edinburgh printer. In September 1792, acknowledging to Alexander Cunningham a diploma conferred by the royal archers, he writes one of his half dozen most remarkable letters, brimming with banter like Falstaff's, then growing savage as Timon, in an attack on the "religious nonsense," which he declares to be "of all the most nonsensical," asking, "why has a religious turn of mind always a tendency to narrow and illiberalise the heart," and then putting the whole storm to rest by the exquisite verse inspired by Miss Lyndsay Baillie,

Maria Riddell

Miss Baillie

"The very deil he couldna' scathe
Whatever wad belang thee ;
He'd look into thy bonie face
And say, 'I canna wrang thee.'"

In the same month the Thomson correspondence begins, one of the poet's earliest contributions to their joint undertaking being "Ye banks and braes and streams around." The first volume was published in July 1793, and shortly afterwards came the refusal of remuneration. In March we have an interesting literary link in a letter to Miss Benson of York, afterwards Mrs Basil Montague, Carlyle's ill-requited patroness, and a request to the bailies of Dumfries to be made a freeman of the town, the granting of which enabled his sons to be well educated in the grammar school at small expense. In April 1793 an exuberant humour overflows in his last letter to his old friend Ainslie, signed Spunkie, with a notable satire on pedants, who are advised to go about with bundles of books bound to their backs. Towards the close of the year he writes, to Mrs Dunlop, of Cowper's "Task," "a glorious poem, bating a few scraps of Calvinistic divinity, it has the religion which ennobles man."

The subject of Burns's Religion might lead us into

deeps beyond the range of the Satires, and supply material for a distinct chapter. His views, seldom clearly formulated, are not always consistent; within limits they vary with varying moods: but they are in the main those of an anxious sceptic, as opposed to either extreme of positive or negative dogmatism. His prevailing reverence in treating sacred subjects has been justly admired: but, while his light words have been gathered up against him, the extent to which he deliberately departed from the "orthodoxy" of the mass of his countrymen has been studiously slurred over. Burns knew his Bible well, and made frequent use of it; but we have no reason to believe that, after manhood, he ever read it otherwise than, as a great modern critic has told us to read it, "like any other book." "This letter," cries his most recent biographer, "seems to savour of Socinianism." The word, often used in Scotland to conjure up the devil of intolerance, is equally applicable to almost all the leading writers of the eighteenth century; the only conspicuous exceptions being Cowper and Johnson. Burns was, as far as he had realised to himself his own position, a Deist, and held that the mission of Christ was to redeem man from himself, rather than from any "wrath to come." "School-divinity," he in mockery exclaims, "raves abroad on all the winds." . . . "On earth discord! a gloomy heaven above, opening her jealous gates to the nineteen-thousandth part of the tithe of mankind! and below an inescapable and inexorable hell, expanding its leviathan jaws for the vast residue of mortals. O doctrine, comfortable and healing to the weary wounded soul of man." On points yet more radical he gives an uncertain sound. *E.g.* "We know nothing, or next to nothing, of the substance and structure of our souls. . . . Are we a piece of machinery, or do those workings argue something within us above the trodden clod? I own myself partial to such proofs of those awful and important realities, a God that 's made all things, man's immaterial and immortal nature." . . . "Can it be possible that when I resign this feverish being I shall still find myself in conscious existence? . . . If there is another life, 'tis only for the good.

'Renan'

Would to God I as firmly believed it, as I ardently wish it." . . . "All my fears and cares are of this world; if there is another, an honest man has nothing to fear from it. Every fair, unprejudiced inquirer must in such degree be a sceptic. As for immortality, we want data to go upon. One thing frightens me much, that we are to live for ever seems too good news to be true." "If there be a life beyond the grave, which I trust there is, and if there be a good God presiding over Nature, which I am sure there is, thou (Fergusson) art now enjoying existence in a glorious world."

> "'Tell us ye dead,
> Will none of you in pity disclose the secret
> What 'tis you are and we must shortly be.'

A thousand times I have made this apostrophe to the departed sons of men, but not one of them has ever thought fit to answer the question. Oh, that some courteous ghost would blab it out. It cannot be. You and I, my friend, must make the experiment by ourselves, and for ourselves."

Stretching out his arms to these vast voids, crying aloud in the wilderness, beating at the bars of the iron gates, Burns had no care to pose as a protagonist about a disputed text, or to ride the whirlwind of a teacup storm over an antiquated ceremonial. His clear, strong mind—none clearer or stronger of his age or nation—tore right through those comparatively trivial counterscarps of discussion, and battered about the citadel; raising the questions of the existence of a beneficent, omnipotent Being, and the hopes of a future life. On the last he is tossed, like a ship at sea: on the first he seems to find an anchor. His ethical standard is, in prose and verse alike, explicit. "Whatever mitigates the woes or increases the happiness of others, this is my criterion of goodness, and whatever injures society at large, or any individual in it" (in which category he is careful to include the whole animal creation), "this is my measure of iniquity." Again, "Of all the qualities we assign to the author and director of Nature, by far the most enviable is to be able to wipe away all tears from all eyes. What

sordid wretches are they who go to their magnificent mausoleums with hardly the consciousness of having made one poor honest heart happy." Burns's Creed is that of Pope's "Universal Prayer;" his Religion is condensed in the couplet—

Pope

> "The heart benevolent and kind
> The most resembles God."

His Millennium was no miraculous cataclysm, no late fulfilment of the wonderful old dream of deliverance from Nero, but the realisation of the slowly dawning golden age—

> "When man to man the warld o'er
> Shall brithers be for a' that."

The poet's literary activity during these years was, with the exception of a few prologues and epigrams, restricted to his songs, which he continued to pour forth as from a well of living waters. He had planned a long poem on a legend of the Bruce, but never found himself in a vein or at leisure to accomplish it; fortunately so, had it led him to blank verse, in which he always failed. To the years 1792, 1793, belong, among others, the lyrics, "The Deil's awa' wi' the Exciseman," "O saw ye bonnie Leslie," "Gala Water," "Poortith Cauld," "Lord Gregory," and "Scots wha hae," the last inspired in the course of an excursion to Galloway with Mr Syme—a friendly stamp collector, who occupied the ground floor of the house in Bank Street. The following year gave birth to "The Minstrel of Lincluden" expanded into "The Vision," beginning, "As I stood by yon roofless tower" (for there are two poems of the same name), "My Love is like a red, red Rose," "It was a' for our rightful King,"* which, if it be Burns's, is his noblest contribution to Jacobite minstrelsy, and about the same date—passing from pole to pole of politics—the Ode on Washington's birthday. In the interval, the family, increased (November 21st, 1792) by the addition of a daughter (who died in the autumn of 1795), had removed to their second

* This poem, with the exception of one verse in the ballad of Molly Stewart, never seems to have been heard of before its appearance in Johnson's Museum.

and larger Dumfries residence, a self-contained house in the Mill Vennel, in which were born the fourth son, James Glencairn (1794), and the fifth, Maxwell, who came into the world on the day and at the hour of his father's funeral. Meanwhile, during these years the poet had twice got into trouble, owing to an amiable indiscretion in the first instance; in the second to a misdemeanour.

Burns's politics are on the surface somewhat puzzling. He was a Jacobite and a Jacobin, not in succession but simultaneously, and attempts have been made to reconcile the apparent contradiction by asserting that he was not much in earnest on either side. This view, based on a note to one of his songs, "except when my passions were heated . . . my Jacobitism was merely by way of *vive la bagatelle*," is adopted by Scott; and Alexander Smith denies the genuineness of both political sentiments, saying the one sprung from his imagination, the other from his discontent. The poet's own apologetic expression, however, loses its force when we remember that most of his best work was due to passion; and his commentators forget that Burns could only write well on matters on which his heart was set. He had only contempt for the squabbles and corruptions of a county election, where "lobster-coated-puppies" were ranged against well-to-do-tradesmen, with their ragged regiments hooting at each other across the street: hence his ballads, &c., on all local and practical affairs might well be dispensed with. His arrows only stuck when they came from a bow at full tension; his bullets only hit the mark when, as in the German fable, they had been dipped in the huntsman's blood. No doubt, modern Jacobitism, like devotion to anything that is past, must draw largely on the feelings, and the spirit of Jacobinism is whetted by a sense of injustice. But Burns has written too much and too well of both to permit his regard for either to be set down to a love of "fine phrases." Verses like these—

> "Great Dundee, who smiling victory led,
> And fell a martyr in her arms."
>
> . . . . . .

"Bold Scrimgeour fellows, gallant Graham,
Auld Covenanters shiver;
Forgive! forgive! much wronged Montrose
Now death and hell engulf thy foes;"

those with the refrain, "There'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame," and (if it was his), "Now a' is done that man can do," are no more the outcome of shallow sentiment than "Let us pray that come it may," is of personal pique. "Politics are not Poetry," said Gœthe, and, wrapped in his own classic art and the problems of all time, wrote at his Meister and Xenien with the echoes of Jena about his ears. But Gœthe was a man apart; his maxim expresses only a half truth; it may suffice for calm philosophers, or the gilt gingerbread of sickly sentimentalism, but poets who are men of like though fiercer passions than their race, the class whose souls are "fiery particles," will be fervid politicians, but of a peculiar, and, as regards their immediate surroundings, perhaps a useless kind. It is of the essence of poetry to attach itself to commanding Personalities, to Romance and to Ideals. The practical government of cómpromising parties has not elicited a single verse worth reading. The poet looks over the heads of Whig and Tory to legends of the setting, or promises of the rising sun, he celebrates Arthur and Barbarossa, or he heralds the millennium of Shelley, or he falls, as Byron did before he enrolled among the Carbonari, at the feet of a Napoleon. By dint of a sham audacity, even the sanguinary charlatan who travestied the last, has enlisted the homage of our greatest poetess. Over the house of Brunswick it has never been found possible to be poetically enthusiastic. The very countenances of the Georges were enough to gorgonise the Muses. In all the arts, they deliberately patronised mediocrity and neglected genius. The great minister of the first and second, Sir Robert Walpole, "the poet's foe," grew dunces faster than Pope could slay them. The great minister of the third, the elder Pitt, was, during the noblest part of his career, practically at war with his sovereign,—the obstinate farmer whose policy had lost to us one continent and embroiled us with another. The King

was a more hopeless theme for song than his son, the fribble, in training to become "the first gentleman in Europe." The poet's letters, whether of defiance or apology, public or private, to the *Star* newspaper or to Mrs Dunlop, are full of hardly-suppressed disgust at the self-complacent "reign of Heavenly Hanoverianism." No wonder his fancy reverted to the Stuarts, whose names from that of their glory, the first James,—the Great King and good poet whose assassination retarded for a hundred years the civilisation of his country,—to that of their shame, the sixth, had been indissolubly linked with minstrelsy and chivalrous adventure. The ill-starred enterprises of the exiled race, appealing at once to the poetic sympathy with fallen greatness and the poetic love of tradition, gave birth to the host of stirring or pathetic ballads on which Burns fed. He grants that the issue tried at Culloden was decided well, but it does not hinder him from weeping with the Highland widow over her slain sons; he theoretically admits that "Sacred Freedom's cause" was that of the Covenanters, but he passes over the martyrs of Episcopacy to celebrate "our greatly injured lovely Scottish Queen," and echo the charge of the Græme at Killiecrankie.

The same temperament which led him to dwell on commanding Personalities and Romance in the past, also led him to look with favour on the imposing figures and aspirations that seemed, in the present, to hold out hopes for the future. Various estimates have been made as to the extent to which the revolution in English verse that marked the close of the century was affected by French politics; but there is no doubt they had points of contact and affinity; nor was it possible that Burns should have remained callous to a movement to which, in his "green unknowing youth," even Wordsworth designed to offer his aid. He settled in Dumfries about the date of Mirabeau's death; when the most moderate liberals still looked with favour on the uprising of a people against centuries of misrule. Somewhat later Jemappes was still regarded as a triumph of defensive warfare, and twelve months more elapsed before Danton had

French Revolution

flung down the head of a king as his gage, and Burke had taken it up in his paroxysms against the regicides. It is hard for us, after ninety years of disenchanting history, to realise the fascination of "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity," before the Reign of Terror had shown the dangers of the first, and experience the unreality of the second. Burns was not slow to manifest and even to parade his sympathies. Towards the close of February 1792, we are told that he seized a smuggling craft, bought four of her guns,* and sent them as a present to the National Assembly, and that, on their being intercepted, the incident, with others, as his proposing the health of George Washington at a banquet, went against him. In any case, rumours got abroad that he not only held but had freely expressed revolutionary opinions. The Government of the day was nervous and alert, remembering Wilkes, alarmed by Paine and the "Friends of the People," they did not hesitate to employ spies, and were ready to accept "delations" of "the suspect." The Board of Excise, with or without instigation, ordered an inquiry to be made into the conduct of their gauger: hearing of which he, anticipating dismissal, sent off an excited letter to Mr Graham, giving the lie direct to the allegations against him. This was followed by another, January 1793, somewhat calmer in tone, but going into painful details of exculpation, and profuse in professions of loyalty to the "sacred key-stone" of our constitution, the king. As far as pains and penalties went the storm blew over, but hope of promotion was at an end, and Burns felt that he had been through the Valley of Humiliation, no salutary discipline for a soul like his, and had to submit to an insolent reprimand. "Mr Corbet," he writes, in a letter to his generous champion, Erskine of Mar, "was instructed to enquire on the spot, and to document me that my business was to act, *not to think*, and that, whatever might be men or measures, it was for me to be silent and obedient." Incredible as it may appear, this *ne plus ultra* of Bumbledom has been recently defended

Paine

* This has been by some dogmatically denied, but the incident is unlikely to have been invented.

on the ground that the poet, being "in the public employ," had no right "to dabble in politics"—*i.e.*, he was to be debarred from expressing his regard for two republics, with both of which we were at peace, because the Tories happened to be then in power. Burns was bound, with all good citizens, to abstain from seditious courses, but his office held, we take it, "aut vitam aut culpam," could not bind him always to agree with the Ministry, nor had he sold his soul and body, or his liberty of speech, for £70 a-year. He ran the risk of every candidate for patronage in offending his possible patrons, but the censure of the Board was an impertinence, and that he felt it to be so the noble close of the letter to Erskine, in which we have the best account of the matter, clearly demonstrates. After this business, the poet's first resolve was to hold his peace. "I jouk and let the jaw gie o'er:" but he chafed under his chains, and sometimes made a noise in rattling them. To use his own image, he felt sore, like Æsop's lion under an ass's kick. During the spring '93, the bitterness breaks out in occasional letters, notably in his answer to the admonitions of the now respectable Nicol and the recently published Political Catechism—addressed to Cunningham—items of which have naturally attracted attention. The writer of this and the nearly contemporaneous lines, "You're welcome to despots, Dumouriez," must have ceased to expect anything from Pitt or Dundas. It is the clenching sarcasm of a man smarting under the sense of neglect, and sick of hope deferred, whose fair-weather friends were treating him as popular people treat everyone under a cloud. Suspected politics, added to doubtful religion, were too much to bear, and they looked black upon him and fought shy of him. To be thought bad is apt to make a man bad: to be excluded from the society of equals is to be driven to that of inferiors. Fatigue and despondency alternating with fits of restless irritation, Burns, too much impressed with the maxim, "Better be the head of the commonalty than the tail of the gentry," sought relief among the lower ranks, where he found a shallow sympathy and countenance in his now besetting sin. "Occasional

hard drinking," he writes to Mrs Dunlop, "is the devil to me. Against this I have again and again bent my resolution, and have greatly succeeded. Taverns I have totally abandoned: it is the private parties among the hard-drinking gentlemen . . . that do me the mischief." On the morning after this letter was written, when the Rev. Mr M'Morline came to baptise his child, he found that Burns had never been in bed, having sat up all night in his own house, with some boon companions.

The next year, 1794, opened with a course of indulgence that twice proved disastrous. On the first occasion, having proposed a toast, "May our success in the war" (the early stages of which he always condemned) "be equal to the justice of our cause," in presence of a fire-eating officer, he narrowly escaped being dragged into a duel. The name of this "lobster" is preserved by the fact of his encounter with the poet, to whom, when the French really became aggressive, it fell to write the most stirring of our challenges of defence. "Does haughty Gaul invasion threat" will survive Captain Dods. On the second occasion, in consequence of his joining in a freak with other over-heated guests, coming from the dinner-table to Maria Riddell's drawing-room, he lost for a time the esteem of her family, and, what was of more moment, of herself. Kissing, which "goes by favour," should never be public, and her indignation, aggravated, it may be, by a latent sense of the disparity of their ranks, was proportioned to her affection for the man to whose genius she has left the finest contemporary tribute. Next morning the poet, duly contrite, addressed the lady in cries of prose and verse that might have melted a stone; but she remaining obdurate, Burns, who could never brook repulse, suddenly passed from apology to lampoon. This completed the alienation, and made him regarded as beyond the pale, a "mauvais sujet," with whom there was no dealing. The quarrel was ultimately made up, but not before his friend, the Laird of Carse, unfortunately involved in it, had died and been lamented in the elegy, "No more ye warblers of the wood." The only remaining event of the year worth recording is a visit

from his old acquaintance, Josiah Walker, whose sententious comments on the occasion afterwards roused the wrath of Christopher North. Nor is there much in the next, but the gathering of the clouds on the entrance to the Valley of the Shadow. Care, remorse, and embarrassment had done their work in undermining a strong constitution. "What a transient business is life," he writes (January 1) to Mrs Dunlop, "very lately I was a boy; but t'other day I was a young man, and I already begin to feel the frigid pulse and stiff joints of old age coming fast over my frame." Walking with a friend who proposed to him to join a county ball, he shook his head, saying, "That's all over now," and adding the oft-quoted verse of Lady Grissel Baillie. His prevailing sentiment was that of his own couplet, characterised as the concentration of many night-thoughts—

> "The pale moon is setting beyond the white wave,
> And time is setting wi' me O."

Yet, ever and anon, his vitality re-asserted itself, and out of the mirk there flashed the immortal democratic creed—

> "Is there for honest poverty
> That hangs his head an a' that?"

In March we have a glint of sunshine; he was reconciled to Maria, again received her letters, criticised her verses, and took heart to make a last appeal to Mr Heron for promotion. In September, the death of his daughter again broke his spirit and accelerated the close. His hand shook, his pulse and appetite failed, and he sunk into an almost uniform gloom: but to the last it was lit with silver streaks. From the very Castle of Despair he wrote, "Contented wi' little and canty wi' mair:" over the dark surface of the rising waters there ripples the music of the lines—

> "Their groves o' sweet myrtle let foreign lands reckon,
> While bright beaming summers exalt the perfume,
> Far dearer to me yon lone glen o' green breckan,
> With the burn stealing under the lang yellow broom."

In January 1796, the poet, on his return from a gathering at the *Globe*, fell asleep in the open air, and caught a chill,

developing into a rheumatic fever, with which he was during the early months intermittently prostrate. On his partial recovery, in April he wrote to Thomson, "I fear it will be some time before I tune my lyre again. By Babel's streams I have sat and wept. I have only known existence by the pressure of sickness, and counted time by the repercussions of pain. I close my eyes in misery, and open them without hope. I look on the vernal day, and say with poor Fergusson—

> "Say wherefore has an all-indulgent heaven
> Life to the comfortless and wretched given."

May was a month of unusual brightness, but cutting east winds went against him, and, though sometimes appearing in the streets, he was so emaciated as hardly to be recognised. His wife being, from her condition, unable to attend to him, her place was supplied by the affectionate tenderness of Jessie Lewars, who hovered about his couch, like the "little fairy," who long afterwards ministered to the dying hours of the matchless German lyrist, Heinrich Heine. To this girl, the sister of a fellow-exciseman, Burns addressed two of his latest and sweetest songs with the stanzas—

Jessie Lewars

> "Here's a health to ane I lo'e dear,
> Thou art sweet as the smile when fond lovers meet,
> And sweet as their parting tear, Jessie."
>
> . . . . . .
>
> "O wert thou in the cauld blast
> On yonder lea, on yonder lea,
> My plaidie to the angry airt
> I'd shelter thee, I'd shelter thee."

The poet himself was rapidly passing beyond the need of shelter. On July 4th he was sent for sea air to a watering-place, Brow on the Solway, and there had a last meeting with Mrs Riddell, saluting her with the question, "Well, madam, have you any commands for the other world?" He spoke without fear of the approaching close, but expressed anxiety for his wife and children, and the possible injury to his fame from the publication of unguarded letters and

verses. "He lamented," we quote from the lady, "that he had written many epigrams on persons against whom he entertained no enmity, and many indifferent poetical pieces, which he feared would be thrust upon the world. . . . The conversation was kept up with great evenness and animation on his side. . . . I had seldom seen his mind greater or more collected." On the 10th, when his landlady wished to let down the blinds against the dazzling of the sun, Burns exclaimed, "Oh, let him shine, he will not shine long for me." His peace of mind was unhappily distracted by the inadequacy of the allowance granted to officers on leave for illness, and by a letter inopportunely arriving from a Dumfries tradesman pressing for the payment of an account. This drew forth two piteous appeals—one to Thomson, the other to his cousin at Montrose—for the loan of small sums to save him "from the horrors of a jail:" with the former he enclosed his last lyrical fragment, "Fairest maid on Devon Banks." The same day he addressed Mrs Dunlop, complaining of her long silence, she too having been influenced by the "fama" of the preceding year. On the 14th, he announced to Jean his arrival on the 18th. When brought home, he was so weak that he could not stand; but he was able to send to his father-in-law his last written lines saying, "Do, for Heaven's sake, send Mrs Armour here immediately." From the 19th to the end he was for the most part speechless, "scarcely himsel' for half-an-hour together," said Mrs Burns afterwards. At one time he was found sitting in a corner of the room, and, on being put back to bed, exclaimed, "Gilbert, Gilbert." Early on the 21st he was in deep delirium, broken only by a few sentences, among them a last flash of humour to an attendant volunteer, "John, don't let the awkward squad fire over me."

The practice of lingering over the death-beds of great men, to peer and moralise, is apt to be either foolish or impertinent. The last utterances of Madame Roland, Gœthe, or Byron may be memorable; but we can draw no conclusion as to their lives, or the truth of their views of life, from the despairing agonies of Cowper, the celestial vision of Pope, or

the serene composure of Hume. The last moments of Burns were stormy, as his life; an execration on the agent who had sent him the dunning account—and the mighty Spirit passed. On the 25th, his remains were carried through Dumfries amid throngs of people asking, "Who will be our poet now?" and buried with local honours. Shortly after the turf had been laid on the mortal vesture of the immortal power, a young lady with an attendant climbed at nightfall over the kirk-yard stile, and strewed the grave with laurel leaves. It was Maria Riddell, who had forgotten his epigrams and still adored his memory. Burns died poor, but scarcely in debt, owing but a few pounds to his friendly landlord, whose only fault with him was that he did not have enough of his company. A subscription started for his family soon raised for their relief the sum of £700, which enabled them to preserve intact his little library and tide over evil days. The poet had a hard struggle for bread, but a tithe of the stones of his monuments would have kept himself and his in affluence through all their lives. Scotland has had sweet singers since his death, one of them (Tannahill) with almost as tuneful a voice in rendering the beauties of external nature; but only two great writers—Scott and Carlyle. Neither combined his lurid and passionate force with the power of musical expression. In these respects his only heir was the future lord of English verse, the boy who was about to leave the shadows of Lach-na-gair for the groves of Newstead.

III.—Retrospect and Summary.

If the purpose of these records of the poet has been in any degree fulfilled, there is little need to ask further what manner of man he was, or to add a sermon to the half-triumphant, half-tragic text: triumphant in that it was given him to mature his faculties and achieve enduring work, tragic in that, thinking of his own often defeated struggle, he wrote, "There is not among the martyrologies so rueful a

narrative." Reticence is rarely, if ever, found in conjunction with genius. Even Shakespeare "unlocked his heart" in the sonnets, and Gœthe in the "Dichtung und Wahrheit." But Burns is garrulous to excess; least of all great writers, less than his nearest mate, Byron (who burns blue lights within otherwise transparent windows), did he or could he hide himself. He parades "the secrets of his prison house," joins a carnival unmasked, and with an approach to indelicacy throws open his chamber door. "I was drunk last night, this forenoon I was polygamic, this evening I am sick and sorry," is the refrain of his confession. Scotch to the core in his perfervid heart, he wears it on his sleeve to be pecked at by innumerable daws, and is, in this respect,—*teste* Thomas Campbell,—"the most un-Scotch-like of Scotchmen." On the other hand, he had all the ambition often unhappily characteristic of his race. "Fate," he exclaims, "had cast my station in the veriest shades of life, but never did a heart pant more ardently than mine to be distinguished." His youthful pride was, by his own account, apt to degenerate into "envy." His career was haunted by a suspicion of being patronised and insulted by rank or wealth, which led him too willingly to associate with his inferiors and to court the company of the wild "merry" rather than the sober "grave." "Calculative creatures" he condemns as inhumane; for errors of impulse he has superabundant charity; he has "courted the acquaintance of blackguards, and, though disgraced by follies," has "often found among them the noblest virtues." Burns's affection for the waifs and strays of mankind was the right side of the temperament of which his own recklessness was the wrong. But his practical sense, on occasion, asserted itself, in a manner worthy of the canniest Scot—*e.g.*, his refusal to stand surety for his brother, his determination never to bring up his sons to any learned profession, all his correspondence with Gilbert and Creech. Burns is at his worst where he is cautious, almost cunning, as in some of the Clarinda letters, a few relating to the Armours, and such passages as that on his return from the West Highland tour, where he talks of

women as a fowler might do of his game. "Miss ——— flew off in a tangent, like a mounting lark. But I am an old hawk at the sport, and wrote her such a cool, deliberate, prudent, reply as brought my bird from her aerial towerings, pop down at my feet like Corporal Trim's hat." Similarly in his toast of "Mrs Mac," at Dumfries dinners, his want of reserve amounts almost to a want of fine feeling, and justifies the censure that if woman, as a cynic has said, constituted the poet's religion, he ought to have dealt with it more reverently. Equally difficult is it to condone some of his vindictive epigrams. "Judex damnatur," who can ignore those abberrations of "Ayrshire's tutelary saint." The rest of the tragedy, "half within and half without," is the commonplace of moralising commentary—that of hot blood, weak will, and straitened circumstances dragging down an eagle's flight. When the devil's advocate has done his worst, "the dissonance is lost in the music of a great man's name." Tried in many ways, he was never tempted to do or to think anything mean. The theme of his prevailing sincerity has been exhausted by a sharer of many of his mental, exempted from his physical, faults, Mr Carlyle. The "finesse" of the poet's flirtations is at least on the surface. His amiable overestimates were genuine to the core. His magnanimity amounted to imprudence; his gratitude to all who ever did him kindness to idolatry. Generosity in almsgiving—a virtue, though an easy one, of the rich, impossible to the poor—was not accessible to Burns; but he had the harder virtue, rare in our scrambling world, of cordially recognising and extolling the men whom he held to be his peers. His anxiety to push the sale of other people's books, as evinced in his letters to Duncan, Tait, and Creech about Grose, Mylne, and Mrs Riddell, is a reproach to an age when poets are animated by the spirit of monopolists. If he loved praise, he was lavish of it. His benevolence, that overflowed the living world, was, despite his polygamic heats, concentrated in the intense domesticity of a good brother and son, husband and father. His works have been

called A Manual of Independence; and that his homage to the "Lord of the lion heart" is no word boast, is seen in his horror of debt, and almost fanatical dread of obligation: they are also models of a charity which goes far to cover his own, as he made it cover the sins of others. Everyone who knew Burns well in private life seems to have loved him; but he owed none of his popularity to complaisance. Nothing in his character is more conspicuous than the shining courage that feared neither false man nor false God, his intolerance of the compromises and impatience of the shifts which are the reproaches of his nation. Yet no man was ever more proud of his nationality. The excess of patriotism which led Fergusson to assail the Union and detest Dr Johnson, passed on to Burns. Here and there his humour sees a little rant in it, as when he writes to Lord Buchan, "Your much loved Scotia about whom you make such a racket;" but his prevailing tone is that of his letter to Lord Eglinton, "I have all those prejudices. . . . There is scarcely anything to which I am so alive as the honour and welfare of Old Scotia; and, as a poet, I have no higher enjoyment than singing her sons and daughters." Hence, perhaps, the provincialism of his themes, which Mr Arnold with his "damnable iteration" of "Scotch drink, Scotch religion, and Scotch manners" perversely confounds with provincialism of thought.* Hence,

* *V.* Introduction to Ward's "English Poets," p. xli. After the novel remark, "The Real Burns is of course in his Scotch poems," Mr Arnold proceeds, "Let us boldly say that of much of this poetry, a poetry dealing perpetually with Scotch drink, Scotch religion, and Scotch manners, a Scotchman's estimate is apt to be personal. A Scotchman is used to this world of Scotch drink, Scotch religion, and Scotch manners; he has a tenderness for it; he meets its poet half way. In this tender mood he reads pieces like the *Holy Fair* or *Halloween*. But this world of Scotch drink, Scotch religion, and Scotch manners is against a poet, not for him, when it is not a partial countryman who reads him; for in itself, it is not a beautiful world, and no one can deny that it is of advantage to a poet to deal with a beautiful world. Burns's world of Scotch drink, Scotch religion, and Scotch manners, is often a harsh, a sordid, a repulsive world; even the world of his *Cottar's Saturday Night* is not a beautiful world." Thereon follow some pages of supercilious patronage of the poet who was, it seems, "a man of vigorous understanding, and (need I say?) a master of language,"

rather than from his more Catholic qualities, the exaggerated homage that his countrymen have paid to his name. The Continent champions the cosmopolite Byron, heavily handicapped by his rank, against England; Scotland has thrown a shield over the errors of her most splendid son, and, lance in rest, dares even her own pulpits to dethrone her "tutelary saint." Seldom has there been a stranger or a more wholesome superstition; for, on the one hand, Burns is the great censor of our besetting sins, on the other, he has lifted our best aspirations to a height they never before attained. Puritans with a touch of poetry have dwelt on the undoubted fact that he "purified" our old songs. The commonplace criticism is correct, but so inadequate as to leave the impression that he was an inspired scavenger, whose function was to lengthen the skirts of Scotland's "high-kilted Muse," and clip her "raucle" tongue. His work was nobler, that of elevating and intensifying our northern imagination. He has touched the meanest animal shapes with Ithuriel's wand, and they have sprung up "proudly eminent." His volumes owe their popularity to their being an epitome of melodies, moods, and memories that had belonged for centuries to the national life: but Burns has given them a new dignity, as well as a deeper pathos, by combining an ideal element with the fullest knowledge of common life and the shrewdest judgment on it. He is the unconscious heir of Barbour, distilling the spirit of the old poet's epic into a battle chant, and of Dunbar, as the caustic satirist, the thistle as well as the rose of his land. He is the conscious pupil of Ramsay, but he leaves his master to make a social protest and lead a literary revolt. Contrast the "Gentle Shepherd" with the "Jolly Beggars"—the one is a court pastoral, like a minuet of the ladies of Versailles on the sward of the Swiss village near

and mockery of his admirers. If the critic's knowledge of Burns may be gauged by his belief that the *Holy Fair* is "met half way" in a mood for "tenderness" for "Scotch religion," his criticism is harmless; but in perpetually playing with paradoxes Mr Arnold runs the risk of spoiling his own "attic style"—the style of "a man of vigorous understanding, and (need I say?) a master of language."

the Trianon, the other is like the march of the Mœnads with Theroigne de Mericourt. Over all this masterpiece is poured "a flood of liquid harmony:" in the acme of the two-edged satire, aimed alike at laws and law-breakers, the graceless crew are raised above the level of gipsies, footpads, and rogues, and made, like Titans, to launch their thunders of rebellion against the world. Ramsay adds to the rough tunes and words of the ballads the refinement of the wits who, in the "Easy" and "Johnstone" Clubs, talked, over their cups, of Prior and Pope, Addison and Gay. Burns inspires them with a fervour that thrills the most wooden of his race. He has purified "John Anderson my Jo," and brought it from the bothy[1] to the "happy fireside clime:" but the following he has glorified :—

1. Semple (seventeenth century)—rudely—

"Should auld acquaintance be forgot
And never thought upon,
The flames of love extinguished
And freely past and gone ;
Is thy kind heart now grown so cold,
In that loving breast of thine,
That thou canst never once reflect
On old langsyne ?"

2. Ramsay (eighteenth century)—classically.

"Methinks around us on each bough
A thousand Cupids play,
While through the groves I walk with you
Each object makes me gay ;
Since your return the sun and moon
With brighter beams do shine,
Streams murmur soft notes while they run
As they did langsyne."

3. Burns—immortally—

"We twa ha'e run about the braes,
And pou'd the gowans fine,
But we've wandered mony a weary foot
Sin' auld langsyne.
We twa ha'e paidl'd in the burn
Frae morning sun till dine,
But seas between us braid ha'e roar'd
Sin' auld langsyne."

[1] hovel, hut

It is the humanity of this and the like that has made Burns pass into the breath of our nostrils. His "voice is on the rolling air;" his arrows in every Scottish heart from California to Cathay. He fed on the past literature of his country as Chaucer on the old fields of English thought, and

> "Still the elements o' sang
> In formless jumble, richt and wrang,
> Went floating in his brain."

But, though as compared with Douglas, Lyndesay, &c., his great power was brevity, he brought forth an hundred-fold. First of the poets of his nation, he struck the chord where Love and Passion and Reality meet. We had had enough of mere sentiment, enough of mere sense, enough of mere sensuality. He came to pass them through a harmonising alembic! To this solid manhood, to this white heat, to the force of language which has made his words and phrases be compared to cannon balls, add the variety that stretches from "Scots wha hae" to "Mary in Heaven," from "Duncan Gray" to "Auld Lang Syne,"—a lyric distance only exceeded by the greater dramatic distance between Falstaff and Ariel, the Walpurgis Nacht and Iphigenia,—and we can understand the tardy[2] fit of enthusiasm in which William Pitt compared Burns to Shakespeare. He who sings alike of Agincourt and Philippi, of Snug the joiner, and the "bank whereon the wild thyme blows," has doubtless no mate in the region of "Scotch drink, Scotch manners, Scotch religion;" but we have no such testimony to the cloud-compelling social genius of Shakespeare as everywhere meets us in regard to Burns. He walked among men as a god of either region. He had that glamour or fascination which, for want of a better word called electric, gave their influence to Irving, Chalmers, and Wilson, who have left little that is readable behind them. Carlyle alone among his successors,—representing the mixture of German idealism, John Knox morality, and the morbid spirit of our sad critical age—Carlyle alone among great Scotch writers,

seems to have had this power: but his thunderous prose wants the softness of his predecessor's verse. Swift, Gibbon, Hume, and Burns are, in our island, the greatest literary figures of the eighteenth, as Scott, Wordsworth, Shelley, and Byron are of the first half of the nineteenth century.

Swift Gibbon Hume

POEMS AND SONGS.

—o—

SONG—HANDSOME NELL.

Tune—"I am a man unmarried."

(Currie, 1800.)

I never had the least thought or inclination of turning Poet till I got once heartily in love, and then *rhyme* and *song* were, in a manner, the spontaneous language of my heart. The following composition was the first of my performances. It is, indeed, very puerile and silly; but I am always pleased with it, as it recalls to my mind those happy days when my heart was yet honest, and my tongue was sincere.—*Common-place Book, Aug.* 1783.

O once I lov'd a bonie lass,
Aye, and[1] I love her still;
And whilst that virtue[2] warms my breast,
I'll love my handsome Nell.

As bonie lasses I hae seen,
And mony full as braw;[a]
But, for a modest gracefu' mien,
The like I never saw.

A bonie lass, I will confess,
Is pleasant to the e'e;
But, without some better qualities,
She's no a[3] lass for me.

---

[a] handsome.

But Nelly's looks are blythe and sweet,
And what is best of a',
Her reputation is complete,
And fair without a flaw.[4]

She dresses ay sae clean and neat,
Both decent and genteel;
And then there's something in her gait
Gars[b] ony dress look weel.[5]

A gaudy dress and gentle air
May slightly touch the heart;
But it's innocence and modesty
That polishes the dart.

'Tis this in Nelly pleases me,
'Tis this enchants my soul;
For absolutely in my breast
She reigns without controul.

[Dr Currie transcribed this song very accurately from the poet's Common-place Book, where it stands recorded under date April 1783. Burns delighted to refer to the incident that gave rise to these juvenile verses:—Nelly Kirkpatrick, daughter of a blacksmith in the neighbourhood of Mount Oliphant, inspired the song in the harvest-field, in the autumn of 1773, when he was yet under fifteen years old. We must refer the reader to the bard's own account of this his first love-experience, contained in the poem addressed to Mrs Scott of Wauchope House, and also in his autobiography; meanwhile let us note how early the power of music seems to have affected Burns. Speaking of "Nell," he says:—"Among other love-inspiring qualities, she sang sweetly; and it was her favourite reel to which I attempted giving an embodied vehicle in rhyme." In his Common-place Book, he has followed the record of it with an elaborate "criticism," which shews how carefully he had been training himself for lyric composition. Here is a sample:—In the second couplet of verse *first* "the expression is a little awkward, and the sentiment too serious." "Stanza the *second* I am well pleased with . . . and I think it conveys a fine idea of a sweet, sonsy lass." He

[b] makes.

condemns verses *third* and *fourth;* but "the thoughts in the *fifth* stanza come finely up to my favourite idea—a sweet, sonsy lass." He approves also of the *sixth* verse, "but the second and fourth lines *ending with short syllables, hurts the whole.*" "The *seventh* stanza has several minute faults; but I remember I composed it in a wild enthusiasm of passion, and to this hour I never recollect it, but my heart melts, and my blood sallies at the remembrance." In 1786, Burns presented copies of some of his early pieces—and this among the rest—to Mrs Stewart of Stair, and that MS. exhibits the following variations:—

[1] An' aye. [2] honour. [3] the.

[4] The fourth verse is remodelled thus:—

But Nelly's looks are blythe and sweet,
Good-humoured, frank, and free;
And still the more I view them o'er,
The more they captive me.

[5] Verse fifth is wanting in the Stair MS. That the poet was not satisfied with these variations is evident from the fact that he afterwards transmitted the song to *Johnson* for publication in its original form.]

HAR'STE.—A FRAGMENT.

Tune—"I had a horse, and I had nae mair."

(ORIGINAL COMMON-PLACE BOOK, 1872.)

Another circumstance of my life, which made very considerable alteration on my mind and manners, was, that I spent my seventeenth* summer a good distance from home, at a noted school on a smuggling coast, to learn mensuration, surveying, dialling, &c. . . . I went on with a high hand in my geometry, till the sun entered *Virgo*, a month which is always a carnival in my bosom; a charming *fillette*, who lived next door to the school, overset my trigonometry, &c. . . . The last two nights of my stay in the country, had sleep been a mortal sin, I was innocent. . . .

Song *second* was the ebullition of that passion which ended the forementioned school business.—*Autobiography.*

Now breezy win's and slaughtering guns
Bring Autumn's pleasant weather,
And the muircock springs on whirring wings
Amang the blooming heather.

---

* Dr Currie and succeeding editors of Burns have printed this word "nineteenth;" the correction is here made from the original MS.

Now waving crops, with yellow tops,
Delight the weary farmer,
An' the moon shines bright when I rove at night,
To muse . . . *

[The name of this "charming *fillette*" was Peggy Thomson; and shortly prior to the first publication of our author's poems she became the wife of a Mr Neilson at Kirkoswald—an "old acquaintance" of Burns, "and a most worthy fellow." When we come to give the song in its finished form (under date 1783), about which time, it seems, Burns experienced a renewed fit of passion for Peggy, we shall give some particulars regarding her history. See page 53.

Here we see that from the very beginning of the poet's attempts at song-writing, he must have a *tune* to prompt his musings. He early laid down this rule, that "to *sowth* the tune over and over, is the readiest way to catch the inspiration and raise the bard into that glorious enthusiasm so strongly characteristic of our old Scotch poetry."]

SONG—O TIBBIE, I HAE SEEN THE DAY.

Tune—"Invercauld's Reel, or Strathspey."

(Johnson's Museum, 1788. Compared with C.-P. Book, 1872.)

Chor.—O Tibbie, I hae seen the day,
Ye wadna been sae shy;
For laik o' gear[a] ye lightly me,
But, trowth, I care na by.

Yestreen I met you on the moor,
Ye spak na, but gaed by like stoure;[b]
Ye geck[c] at me because I'm poor,
But fient[d] a hair care I.
O Tibbie, I hae seen the day, &c.

---

[a] lack of money. [b] dust in motion. [c] toss the head. [d] a petty oath.

---

* In the extended version, printed p. 53, this line reads "To muse upon my charmer," but in the Common-place Book, after "To muse," a name, supposed to be Jean Armour, is written in *cypher*, or shorthand. If this supposition is correct it only shews what "charmer" was uppermost in the poet's mind when he made the entry in August 1785.

When comin hame on Sunday last,
Upon the road as I cam past,
Ye snufft an gae your head a cast—
But trowth I care't na by.
O Tibbie, I hae seen the day, &c.

I doubt na, lass, but ye may think,
Because ye hae the name o' clink,[e]
That ye can please me at a wink,
Whene'er ye like to try.
O Tibbie, I hae seen the day, &c.

But sorrow tak him that's sae mean,
Altho' his pouch o' coin were clean,
Wha follows ony saucy quean,
That looks sae proud and high.
O Tibbie, I hae seen the day, &c.

Altho' a lad were e'er sae smart,
If that he want the yellow dirt,
Ye'll cast your head anither airt,[f]
And answer him fu' dry.
O Tibbie, I hae seen the day, &c.

But if he hae the name o' gear,
Ye'll fasten to him like a brier,
Tho' hardly he, for sense or lear,[g]
Be better than the kye.
O Tibbie, I hae seen the day, &c.

But, Tibbie, lass, tak my advice:
Your daddie's gear maks you sae nice;

---

[e] cash. [f] direction. [g] education.

The deil a ane wad spier[h] your price,
Were ye as poor as I.
O Tibbie, I hae seen the day, &c.

There lives a lass beside yon park,
I'd rather hae her in her sark,
Than you wi' a' your thousand mark;
That gars[i] you look sae high.
O Tibbie, I hae seen the day, &c.

[A little controversy has arisen regarding the date of this song. In the poet's Glenriddell notes, he expressly says of it:—"This song I composed about the age of seventeen." Mrs Begg, on the other hand, (who, by the way, was only five years old when her brother was seventeen,) insisted that the Tibbie of the song was Isabella Stein, of Tarbolton Parish. In a note to the present writer, she says:—"Tibbie Stein lived at Little Hill, a farm marching with that of Lochlie: that the song was written upon her was well known in the neighbourhood, no one doubting it."

With all deference, we are inclined to adhere to the poet's direct statement, and regard this as a Mount Oliphant incident, following immediately after the summer he spent at Kirkoswald. We feel greatly strengthened in this opinion by a corresponding record of Burns, the correctness of which has also been much controverted by his brothers and sisters. It is this:—"In my seventeenth year (*i.e.*, 1775, two years before the Lochlie period), to give my manners a brush, I went to a country dancing-school. My father had an unaccountable antipathy against these meetings; and my going was, what to this hour I repent, in absolute defiance of his commands." We suspect this country dancing-school would be in the village of Dalrymple, and the second verse of the above song seems to refer to the road from Dalrymple parish church, where, as may be supposed, the Burnes family would occasionally attend. Even the *strathspey* to which the poet composed these words would seem to have some connection with that dancing-school, which it is likely Robert attended alone, and perhaps unknown to the younger members of the family.

The second stanza and the closing one are both wanting in Johnson's *Museum*. They are inserted here from the Common-place Book. Dr Currie's version of the concluding stanza reads thus:—

There lives a lass in yonder park,
I wadna gie her in her sark
For thee, wi' a' thy thousan' mark;
Ye needna look sae high.]

---

[h] **inquire.** [i] **makes.**

SONG—I DREAM'D I LAY.

(JOHNSON'S MUSEUM, 1788.)

These two stanzas I composed when I was seventeen, and are among the oldest of my printed pieces.—*Glenriddell Notes in Cromek.*

I DREAM'D I lay where flowers were springing
Gaily in the sunny beam;
List'ning to the wild birds singing,
By a falling crystal stream:
Straight the sky grew black and daring;
Thro' the woods the whirlwinds rave;
Trees with aged arms were warring,
O'er the swelling drumlie wave.

Such was my life's deceitful morning,
Such the pleasures I enjoy'd:
But lang or noon, loud tempests storming,
A' my flowery bliss destroy'd.
Tho' fickle fortune has deceiv'd me—
She promis'd fair, and perform'd but ill,
Of mony a joy and hope bereav'd me—
I bear a heart shall support me still.

[There can be no doubt that this production was suggested to the young lyrist by his admiration of Mrs Cockburn's song, "I've seen the smiling of Fortune beguiling," which, about the year 1764, found its way into miscellaneous collections of song. It appeared in one of these published in that year, called *The Blackbird;* and also in a like miscellany entitled *The Charmer*, and in another named *The Lark* (both of the latter dated 1765). Any one of them may have been that "Select Collection" which, he tells us, was his *vade mecum* before the Burnes family removed from Mount Oliphant.

The poet again and again reverts to the last four lines of this song, as if the conning them over yielded him some comfort. "At the close of that dreadful period"—his distress at Irvine—he adopted these lines

as the *opening* of a little "sang to soothe his misery," only altering line *third* to suit his altered circumstances, thus:—

"Of mistress, friends and wealth bereav'd me."

But the embryo minstrel, in composing the present song, had Mrs Cockburn's *Flowers of the Forest* rather too much in his eye; for he not only copied her ideas, but her very expressions. For *her* "silver streams shining in the sunny beams," we have here the tyro's "crystal stream" falling "gaily in the sunny beam." The river Tweed of Mrs Cockburn "grows *drumly* and dark," and so does the streamlet of the young dreamer become a "swelling *drumlie* wave." The lady hears "loud tempests storming before the mid-day," and so does the boy Burns hear "lang or noon, loud tempests storming." Finally, the authoress is "perplexed" with the "sporting of fickle fortune," and our poet is wretchedly "deceived" by the ill-performed promises of the same "fickle fortune;" and, not to be outdone by the lady's defiance of fortune's frowns, the independent youngster boasts that he "bears a heart shall support him still." A quarter of a century ago we pointed out those innocent plagiarisms to the late Robert Chambers, who refers to them in his last remarks on this song.]

5 SONG—IN THE CHARACTER OF A RUINED FARMER.

Tune—"Go from my window, Love, do."

(CHAMBERS, 1852, COMPARED WITH THE ORIG. MS.)

THE sun he is sunk in the west,
All creatures retirèd to rest,
While here I sit, all sore beset,
With sorrow, grief, and woe:
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O!

The prosperous man is asleep,
Nor hears how the whirlwinds sweep;
But Misery and I must watch
The surly tempest blow:
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O!

There lies the dear [partner] of my breast ; [mate]
Her cares for a moment at rest :
Must I see thee, my youthful pride,
Thus brought so very low !
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O !

There lie my sweet [babies] in her arms ; [babes]
No anxious fear their [little] hearts alarms ; [*delete*]
But for their sake my heart does ache,
With many a bitter throe :
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O !

I once was by Fortune carest :
I once could relieve the distrest :
Now life's poor [support,] hardly earn'd, [pittance,]
My fate will scarce bestow:
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O !

No comfort, no comfort I have !
How welcome to me were the grave !
But then my wife and children dear—
O, whither would they go !
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O !

O whither, O [whither] shall I turn ! [where]
All friendless, forsaken, forlorn !
For, in this world, Rest or Peace
I never more shall know !
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O !

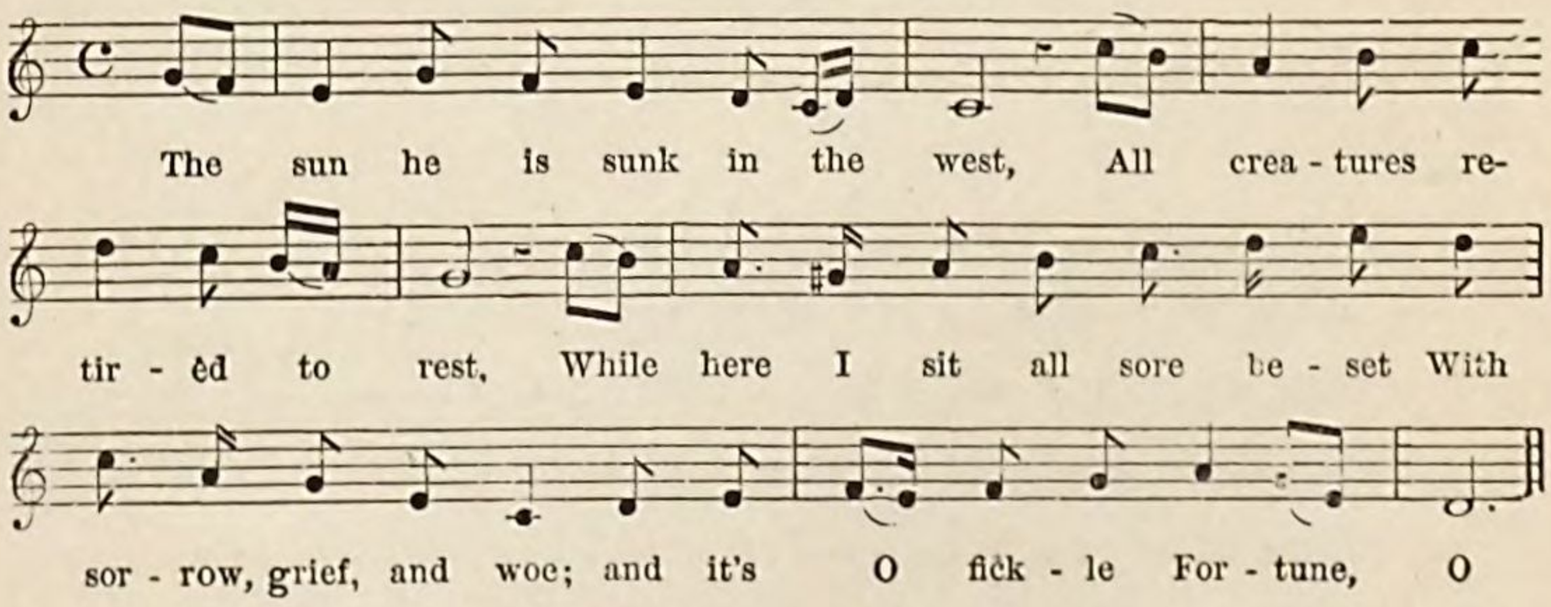
[The original of this early production is in the possession of William Nelson, Esq., Edinburgh. It is a stray leaf from a collection formerly known as the Stair MS. now dissevered and scattered abroad. The "ruined farmer" here is undoubtedly meant as a presentment of the author's father bravely struggling to weather out his hard fate at Mount

Oliphant. As a pathetic dirge, it is the best illustration of the following passage in the poet's autobiography :—

"The farm proved a ruinous bargain. . . . . My father was advanced in life when he married. I was the eldest of seven children, and he, worn out by early hardship, was unfit for labour. My father's spirit was soon irritated, but not easily broken. There was a freedom in his lease in two years more ; and to weather these two years we retrenched expenses," &c.

But what shall we say regarding the youthful poet's *dirge*, and the antique, wailing melody to which he fitted the words? He has given us the title of that tune, which fortunately we are enabled to present here to our readers ; for Stenhouse in his notes to *Johnson's Museum*, records that Burns recovered that old melody, and transmitted it to Johnson. The wonder is—in that sequestered locality, and under eighteen years old--how he acquired, and retained it in his memory. The text is very rough, and in order to fit the melody, the singer will require to substitute the words suggested on the margin for those within brackets in the text. The word "little," in verse fourth, must be omitted.]

Slow Time. *Air*—"Go from my window, love, do"



TRAGIC FRAGMENT.

(From the Poet's MS. in the Monument at Edinburgh, with Heading from Cromek, 1808.)

In my early years, nothing less would serve me than courting the Tragic Muse. I was, I think, about eighteen or nineteen when I sketched the outlines of a tragedy forsooth ; but the bursting of a cloud of family misfortunes, which had for some time threatened us, prevented my farther progress. In those days I never wrote down anything ; so, except a speech or two, the whole has escaped my memory. The following, which I most distinctly remember, was an exclamation from

a great character—great in occasional instances of generosity, and daring at times in villanies. He is supposed to meet with a child of misery, and exclaims to himself—

ALL villain[1] as I am—a damnèd wretch,
A hardened, stubborn, unrepenting sinner,[2]
Still my heart melts at human wretchedness;
And with sincere but[3] unavailing sighs
I view the helpless children of distress:
With tears indignant I behold the oppressor
Rejoicing in the honest man's destruction,
Whose unsubmitting heart was all his crime.—
Ev'n you, ye hapless[4] crew! I pity you;
Ye, whom the seeming good think sin to pity;
Ye poor, despised, abandoned vagabonds,
Whom Vice, as usual, has turn'd o'er to ruin.
Oh! but for friends and interposing Heaven,[5]
I had been driven forth like you forlorn,
The most detested, worthless wretch among you!
O injured God! Thy goodness has endow'd me
With talents passing most of my compeers,
Which I in just proportion have abused—
As far surpassing other common villains
As Thou in natural parts has given[6] me more.

[Notwithstanding the author's own authority for classing the foregoing with his very earliest efforts in poetical composition, it seems to have undergone revision and amendment at a later period. The copy we print from is perhaps a stray leaf of the Common-place Book, or manuscript collection of his early pieces, referred to by Alexander Smith as having been presented by Burns to Mrs Dunlop. It varies somewhat from the copy inserted in the original Common-place Book now at Greenock. The version we adopt has the following heading—

"A Fragment in the Hour of Remorse, on Seeing a Fellow-Creature in Misery, whom I had once known in Better Days."

The "human wretchedness" deplored in this pathetic soliloquy was that of the suffering household at Mount Oliphant, which the poet has

so touchingly recorded in his autobiography. We have in these lines a glance at the tyrant factor, and his "insolent, threatening epistles, which used to set us all in tears,"—

> "With tears indignant I behold the oppressor
> Rejoicing in the honest man's destruction,
> Whose unsubmitting heart was all his crime,"

in which last line we discern the "stubborn, ungainly integrity" of the poet's noble father. The speaker's sympathy for "poor, despised, abandoned vagabonds," corresponds in spirit with that passage in the Common-place Book, of date March 1784, where he introduces this *Fragment*. Cromek, in 1808, first published the piece; but his copy wants the five closing lines, which accordingly we infer were added by the poet in 1784. Cromek's version was printed from a copy found among the poet's papers, headed with the introductory narrative prefixed to the text. It is curious to find Burns thus early attempting dramatic composition; but it is certain that William Burnes had a few of Shakespeare's plays among the books on his shelf at Mount Oliphant.

The variations in the Common-place Book are as follow:—

[1] devil. [2] villain. [3] tho'. [4] helpless.
[5] O, but for kind, tho' ill-requited friends. [6] in nat'ral parts hast.]

THE TARBOLTON LASSES.

(CHAMBERS, 1851.)

IF ye gae up to yon hill-tap,
Ye'll there see bonie Peggy;
She kens her father is a laird,
And she forsooth's a leddy.

There Sophy tight, a lassie bright,
Besides a handsome fortune:
Wha canna win her in a night,
Has little art in courtin.

Gae down by Faile, and taste the ale,
And tak a look o' Mysie;
She's dour[a] and din,[b] a deil within,
But aiblins[c] she may please ye.

---

[a] sulky. [b] ill-complexioned. [c] perhaps.

If she be shy, her sister try,
Ye'll may be fancy Jenny ;
If ye'll dispense wi' want o' sense—
She kens hersel she's bonie.

As ye gae up by yon hillside,
Speer in for bonie Bessy ;
She'll gie ye a beck, and bid ye light,
And handsomely address ye.

There's few sae bonie, nane sae guid,
In a' King George' dominion ;
If ye should doubt the truth o' this—
It's Bessy's ain opinion !

[Here we have a little of the "satirical seasoning" referred to by David Sillar, and of which we have already seen a good sample in his address to "Saucy Tibbie." These verses, however, can hardly be considered as a song, and—as Chambers has observed—they are strikingly inferior to the poet's average efforts. It is rather singular that Chambers does not state where he got these lines, and on what grounds he became satisfied of their authenticity.]

AH, WOE IS ME, MY MOTHER DEAR.

Paraphrase of Jeremiah, 15th Chap., 10th verse.

(GLENRIDDELL MSS., 1874.)

AH, woe is me, my Mother dear !
A man of strife ye've born me :
For sair contention I maun bear ;
They hate, revile, and scorn me.

I ne'er could lend on bill or band,
That five per cent. might blest me ;
And borrowing, on the tither hand,
The de'il a ane wad trust me.

Yet I, a coin-denièd wight,
By Fortune quite discarded ;
Ye see how I am, day and night,
By lad and lass blackguarded !

[Burns in 1785 records the remark—"I don't well know what is the reason of it, but somehow or other though I am, when I have a mind, pretty generally beloved ; yet I never could get the art of commanding *respect*." Again, referring to his early boyhood, he says in his autobiography :—"At those years, I was by no means a favourite with anybody." David Sillar, speaking of Burns in 1781, says :—"His social disposition easily procured him acquaintances ; but a certain satirical seasoning, while it set the rustic circle in a roar, was not unaccompanied by its kindred attendant,—suspicious fear. I recollect hearing his neighbours observe *he had a great deal to say for himself*, but that they suspected his *principles*. He wore the only tied hair in the parish ; and in the church, his plaid, which was of a particular colour, I think *fillemot*,* was wrapped in a particular manner round his shoulders." The poet's account of himself in the text has suggested the above quotations ; but we feel rather at a loss to fix the particular period of composition. The verses stand recorded in the Glenriddell volume at Liverpool, in the poet's autograph, without any indication of date ; but it may be assumed that he would be at least twenty-one years old before he could be concerned in "bills and bonds."

A corrupt copy of the verses occurs in the *Ettrick Shepherd's* Memoir of Burns, 1834, where they are entitled "Stanzas composed while sitting between the stilts of the plough." It seems that Burns had inscribed this paraphrase from Jeremiah on the fly-leaf of his own copy of Fergusson's Poems. That relic is now in the possession of J. T. Gibson-Craig, Esq., Edinburgh. Hogg may have seen that production, and quoted the words from memory. The words paraphrased are as follows :—"Woe is me, my mother, thou hast born me a man of strife, and a man of contention to the whole earth. I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury ; yet every one of them doth curse me."]

D. Sillar

---

* A yellow-brown colour—from *feuille morte*, a dead leaf.

MONTGOMERIE'S PEGGY.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

ALTHO' my bed were in yon muir,
Amang the heather, in my plaidie;
Yet happy, happy would I be,
Had I my dear Montgomerie's Peggy.

When o'er the hill beat surly storms,
And winter nights were dark and rainy;
I'd seek some dell, and in my arms
I'd shelter dear Montgomerie's Peggy.

Were I a Baron proud and high,
And horse and servants waiting ready;
Then a' 'twad gie o' joy to me,—
The sharin't with Montgomerie's Peggy.

[Speaking of the earlier portion of the seven years he spent in Tarbolton Parish (1777 to 1784), the poet says he felt as much pleasure in being in the secret of half the amours in the parish, as ever did Premier in knowing the intrigues of half the courts in Europe. "Montgomerie's Peggy," he tells us, was a deity of his own for six or eight months. "I began the affair," he says, "merely in a *gaieté de cœur*, or, to tell the truth, (what would scarcely be believed,) a vanity of showing my parts in courtship, particularly my abilities at a *billet-doux*, which I always piqued myself upon, made me lay siege to her." Mrs Begg, in her notes regarding this affair, says:—"The lady was housekeeper at Coilsfield House; my brother Robert had met her frequently at Tarboth Mill; they sat in the same church, and contracted an intimacy together; but she was engaged to another before ever they met. So, on her part, it was nothing but amusement, and on Burns' part, little more, from the way he speaks of it."]

THE PLOUGHMAN'S LIFE.

(Cromek, 1808.)

As I was a-wand'ring ae morning in spring,
I heard a young ploughman sae sweetly to sing;
And as he was singin', thir words he did say,—
There's nae life like the ploughman's in the month o' sweet
May.

The lav'rock in the morning she 'll rise frae her nest,
And mount i' the air wi' the dew on her breast,
And wi' the merry ploughman she 'll whistle and sing,
And at night she 'll return to her nest back again.

[Gilbert Burns expressed to Cromek a strong doubt regarding his brother's authorship of these lines, as also of some other pieces found in his handwriting, and included with the *Reliques* of the Poet; but as the authorship of the "Bonie Muirhen"—one of the pieces referred to—has been since clearly traced to Burns, we do not feel at liberty to reject the lines in the text.]

THE RONALDS OF THE BENNALS.

(Chambers, 1851.)

In Tarbolton, ye ken, there are proper young men,
And proper young lasses and a', man;
But ken ye the Ronalds that live in the Bennals,
They carry the gree[a] frae them a', man.

Their father's a laird, and weel he can spare't,
Braid money to tocher[b] them a', man;
To proper young men, he'll clink[c] in the hand
Gowd guineas a hunder or twa, man.

---

[a] pre-eminence. [b] marriage-portion. [c] count.

There's ane they ca' Jean, I'll warrant ye've seen,
As bonie a lass or as braw,[d] man ;
But for sense and guid taste she'll vie wi' the best,
And a conduct that beautifies a', man.

The charms o' the min', the langer they shine,
The mair admiration they draw, man ;
While peaches and cherries, and roses and lilies,
They fade and they wither awa, man.

If ye be for Miss Jean, tak this frae a frien',
A hint o' a rival or twa, man ;
The Laird o' Blackbyre wad gang through the fire,
If that wad entice her awa, man.

The Laird o' Braehead has been on his speed,
For mair than a towmond[e] or twa, man ;
The Laird o' the Ford will straught on a board,
If he canna get her at a', man.

Then Anna comes in, the pride o' her kin,
The boast of our bachelors a', man :
Sae sonsy[f] and sweet, sae fully complete,
She steals our affections awa, man.

If I should detail the pick and the wale
O' lasses that live here awa, man,
The fau't wad be mine if they didna shine
The sweetest and best o' them a', man.

I lo'e her mysel, but darena weel tell,
My poverty keeps me in awe, man ;

---

[d] fine. [e] twelvemonth. [f] buxom.

For making o' rhymes, and working at times,
Does little or naething at a', man.

Yet I wadna choose to let her refuse,
Nor hae 't in her power to say na, man:
For though I be poor, unnoticed, obscure,
My stomach 's as proud as them a', man.

Though I canna ride in weel-booted pride,
And flee o'er the hills like a craw, man,
I can haud up my head wi' the best o' the breed,
Though fluttering ever so braw, man.

My coat and my vest, they are Scotch o' the best,
O' pairs o' guid breeks I hae twa, man;
And stockings and pumps to put on my stumps,
And ne'er a wrang steek in them a', man.

My sarks they are few, but five o' them new,
Twal' hundred,* as white as the snaw, man,
A ten-shillings hat, a Holland cravat;
There are no mony poets sae braw, man.

I never had freens weel stockit in means,
To leave me a hundred or twa, man;
Nae weel-tocher'd aunts, to wait on their drants,[g]
And wish them in hell for it a', man.

I never was cannie[h] for hoarding o' money,
Or claughtin[i] 't together at a', man;

---

[g] long prayers. [h] cunning, prudent. [i] grasping.

---

* Woven in a reed of 1200 divisions, and therefore considerably coarser than the "1700 linen" spoken of in *Tam o' Shanter*.

I 've little to spend, and naething to lend,
But deevil a shilling I awe, man.

[The Bennals is a farm in the western part of the parish of Tarbolton, near Afton Lodge, about five miles from Lochlie. The two young women spoken of in this piece were the predominant belles of the district; being good-looking, fairly educated, and the children of a man reputed wealthy. Gilbert Burns wooed the elder sister, Jeanie Ronald, who, after a lengthened correspondence, refused him on account of his poverty. She became the wife of John Reid, a farmer at Langlands, not far from the Bennals. The younger sister, Annie, appears to have taken the poet's fancy a little; but he was too proud to afford her a chance of refusing him.

A few years after this period, one of the bard's letters gives us a glimpse of the "ups and downs of life" in connection with the *Ronalds of the Bennals*. Writing to his brother William in November 1789, he says:—"The only Ayrshire news that I remember in which I think you will be interested, is that Mr Ronald is bankrupt. You will easily guess, that from his insolent vanity in his sunshine of life, he will feel a little retaliation from those who thought themselves eclipsed by him."

Chambers has neglected to state whence he derived these verses; he merely indicates that they had appeared fugitively somewhere before he gave them a fixed place among the author's works. The small lairdships referred to in the fifth and sixth verses cannot be found in the Ordnance Map of Tarbolton parish; but more than one "Braehead" appears in the neighbouring parishes. "Ford" may be a contraction of Failford, near Tarbolton.]

SONG—HERE'S TO THY HEALTH.

(Johnson's Museum, 1796.)

Here's to thy health, my bonie lass,
Gude night and joy be wi' thee;
I'll come nae mair to thy bower-door,
To tell thee that I lo'e thee.
O dinna think, my pretty pink,
But I can live without thee:
I vow and swear I dinna care,
How lang ye look about ye.

Thou'rt ay sae free informing me,
Thou hast nae mind to marry;
I'll be as free informing thee,
Nae time hae I to tarry:
I ken thy freens try ilka means
Frae wedlock to delay thee;
Depending on some higher chance,
But fortune may betray thee.

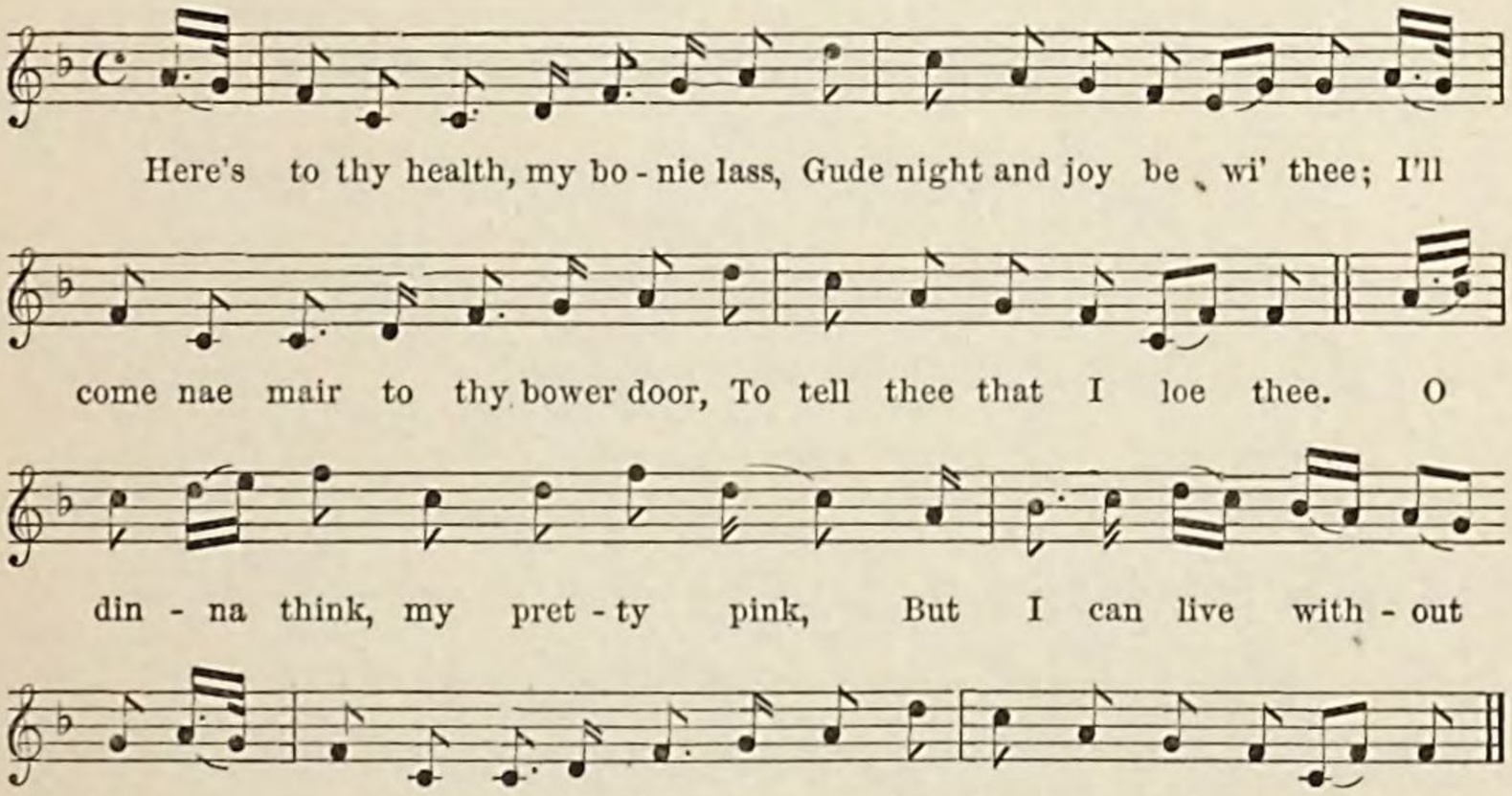
I ken they scorn my low estate,
But that does never grieve me;
For I'm as free as any he;
Sma' siller will relieve me.
I'll count my health my greatest wealth,
Sae lang as I'll enjoy it;
I'll fear nae scant, I'll bode nae want,
As lang's I get employment.

But far off fowls hae feathers fair,
And, ay until ye try them,
Tho' they seem fair, still have a care;
They may prove as bad as I am.
But at twel at night, when the moon shines bright,
My dear, I'll come and see thee;
For the man that loves his mistress weel,
Nae travel makes him weary.

[Against our own instincts, we were at one time disposed to exclude this production from Burns' collected pieces, in deference to the dictum of his sister, Mrs Begg, who pronounced it to be one of those familiar ditties commonly sung at rural firesides before his efforts in that way were known. The poet sent the song, along with its very sprightly melody, to Johnson at some unascertained period; but it did not appear in the *Museum* till the year of the author's death, and his name is there attached to it. The words are not found in any collection of date prior to their publication in Johnson's work; and as Mrs Begg would be no more than ten years old when, as we conjecture,

this song was composed by her brother, she might naturally, at some after period, mistake it for an old song. It is in every respect characteristic of Burns' manner and sentiments in early manhood; and the strathspey tune to which it is set, suggests his early dancing-school experiences, and the occasional balls of the Tarbolton Bachelors. We append an outline of the music, to enable the reader fully to realise the rustic beauty of this early lyric. Nathaniel Gow's composition, called, "Lady Shaftsbury's Strathspey," is apparently borrowed from this melody.

Air—"Laggan Burn."



THE LASS OF CESSNOCK BANKS.

(ALDINE ED., 1839.)

ON Cessnock banks a lassie dwells;[1]
Could I describe her shape and mien;
Our lasses a' she far excels,[2]
An' she has twa sparkling rogueish een.[3]

She's sweeter[4] than the morning dawn,
When rising Phœbus first is seen;
And[5] dew-drops twinkle o'er the lawn;
An' she has twa sparkling rogueish een.

She's stately like yon youthful ash,
That grows the cowslip braes between,
And drinks the stream with vigour fresh ;[7]
An' she has twa sparkling rogueish een.[6]

She's spotless like[8] the flow'ring thorn,
With flow'rs so white and leaves so green,
When purest in the dewy morn ;
An' she has twa sparkling rogueish een.[6]

Her looks[9] are like the vernal May,
When ev'ning Phœbus shines serene ;
While birds rejoice on every spray ;
An' she has twa sparkling rogueish een.[6]

Her hair is like the curling mist,
That climbs[10] the mountain-sides at e'en,
When flow'r-reviving rains are past ;
An' she has twa sparkling rogueish een.[6]

Her forehead's like the show'ry bow,
When gleaming[11] sunbeams intervene
And gild the distant mountain's brow ;
An' she has twa sparkling rogueish een.[6]

Her cheeks are like yon crimson gem,
The pride of all the flowery scene,
Just opening on its thorny stem ;
An' she has twa sparkling rogueish een.

Her bosom's like the nightly snow,
When pale the morning rises keen ;
While hid the murm'ring streamlets flow ;
An' she has twa sparkling rogueish een.

Her lips are like yon[12] cherries ripe,
That sunny walls from Boreas screen;
They tempt the taste and charm the sight;
An' she has twa sparkling rogueish een.[6]

Her teeth are like a flock of sheep,
With fleeces newly washen clean;
That slowly mount the rising steep;
An' she has twa sparkling rogueish een.[6]

Her breath is like the fragrant breeze,
That gently stirs the blossom'd bean;
When Phœbus sinks behind the seas;
An' she has twa sparkling rogueish een.[6]

Her voice is like the ev'ning thrush,
That sings on[13] Cessnock banks unseen;
While his mate sits nestling in the bush;
An' she has twa sparkling rogueish een.[6]

But it's not her air, her form, her face,
Tho' matching beauty's fabled queen;
'Tis[14] the mind that shines in ev'ry grace,
An' chiefly in her rogueish[15] een.

[This must have been composed just before the poet's short sojourn in the town of Irvine. He was passionately in love with the subject of this poem, or "Song of Similes" as it has been called. Her name was Ellison Begbie, her father being a small farmer in Galston parish, and she herself at that time in service with a family who resided near Cessnock water, about two miles north-east from Lochlie. Burns has made no distinct reference to her in his autobiography, although she seems to have been the heroine of a few of his most admired lyrics. His sister, Mrs Begg, about thirty years ago, first revealed the fact that the four love-letters to "My dear E." in Currie's first edition (and which were withdrawn from subsequent issues of that work) were addressed to Ellison Begbie, who, after some intimacy and correspondence, rejected his suit, and soon married another lover. Referring to his desponding

condition at Irvine, he writes :—"To crown my distress, a *belle-fille* whom I adored, and who had pledged her soul to meet me in the field of matrimony, jilted me with peculiar circumstances of mortification." This misleading allusion, viewed in connection with the letters he addressed to her, and with what he had written in his Common-place Book about "Montgomery's Peggy," created much confusion in the minds of the poet's annotators, until Mrs Begg set these matters right.

As might be predicated of one who could inspire sentiments and imagery like those contained in these verses, the subject of them is described by the poet's sister as having been a superior person, and a general favourite in her neighbourhood. Burns himself in one of his letters thus addresses her :—"All these charming qualities, heightened by an education much beyond anything I have ever met in any woman I ever dared to approach, have made an impression on my heart that I do not think the world can ever efface."

Cromek, in 1808, first made the world acquainted with this production, in a somewhat imperfect form. He traced out the subject of it, as a married lady resident in Glasgow, and from her own lips noted down the words to the extent of her recollection. Pickering's version here given was printed from the poet's manuscript, recovered from some other source. A whole stanza is devoted to each of her charms, commencing with her "twa sparkling, rogueish een," and embracing every personal and mental grace. At verse six he comes to her *hair*, and thereafter in succession he descants on her *forehead*, her *cheeks*, her *bosom*, her *lips*, her *teeth*, her *breath*, her *voice*, and lastly her *mind*. At verse nine, through an awkward inadvertency in transcribing, he sets down "Her teeth" instead of "Her bosom," to which the similitude used very appropriately applies; and the *teeth* of his charmer have full justice done them in stanza eleven. This slip of the pen on the transcriber's part we have here corrected. In the MS. the author has directed the words to be sung to the tune of "If he be a butcher neat and trim"—whatever that air may be; which confirms his own statement that he could never compose a lyric without *crooning* a melody in his mind, to aid his inspiration and regulate the rhythm of his verses.

The variations in Cromek's version are as follow:—

[1] there lives a lass. [2] The graces of her weel-far'd face.
[3] And the glancin' of her sparklin' een. [4] fresher. [5] When.
[6] An' she's twa glancin' sparklin' een. [7] And shoots its head above each bush.
[8] as. [9] Her looks are like the sportive lamb,
When flow'ry May adorns the scene,
That wantons round its bleating dam,
An she's twa glancin' sparklin' een.
[10] shades. [11] shining. [12] the. [13] in. [14] But. [15] sparklin'.

Cromek has no stanzas representing the *eighth* and *ninth* of the present version, devoted respectively to the "cheeks" and "bosom" of the fair one, and his eighth stanza is our thirteenth.]

SONG—BONIE PEGGY ALISON.

Tune—"The Braes o' Balquhidder."

(JOHNSON'S MUSEUM, 1788.)

Chor.—And I'll kiss thee yet, yet,
And I'll kiss thee o'er again;
And I'll kiss thee yet, yet,
My bonie Peggy Alison.

Ilk care and fear, when thou art near,
I ever mair defy them, O!
Young kings upon their hansel throne *
Are no sae blest as I am, O!
And I'll kiss thee yet, yet, &c.

When in my arms, wi' a' thy charms,
I clasp my countless treasure, O!
I seek nae mair o' Heav'n to share
Than sic a moment's pleasure, O!
And I'll kiss thee yet, yet, &c.

And by thy een sae bonie blue,
I swear I'm thine for ever, O!
And on thy lips I seal my vow,
And break it shall I never, O!
And I'll kiss thee yet, yet, &c.

[This and the song which immediately follows (*Mary Morison*), long went wandering in search of the living originals; but no fair damsels nor *sonsie lasses* in the parish of Tarbolton, bearing such names, were ever heard of. The poet, in sending the latter song to George Thomson, expressly told him it was "a juvenile production;" and as he at the

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* This expression may require explanation to some. "Hansel" means the *first-fruit* of an achievement, or of a particular field, or season: hence a gift at New-Year time is so called. The term "maiden throne" would precisely explain the poet's phrase here.

same time admitted that all his earlier love-songs were the breathings of real passion—a legend of his heart being inscribed on each of them—a "heroine-hunt" for the inspirers of them was the eventful result. Gilbert Burns was applied to for information regarding *Mary Morison*, and he replied that she was also the subject of some light verses, beginning, "And I'll kiss thee yet." This clue suggested to the present writer that the poet had simply disguised these juvenile productions by altering the names a little. Mrs Begg's information regarding her brother's earnest passion for the *Lass of Cessnock Banks*—Ellison, or Alison Begbie, by name—started the natural idea that Burns must have attempted to weave her name into some snatch of song. Her surname, however, being so very prosaic and untunable, what was a poor poet to do? His object could be attained only by compromise, and that might be accomplished to some extent by transposing *Alison Begbie* into "Peggy Alison,"—a very euphonious by-name indeed! Let us take for granted, that such was the case with the song in our text, and then it follows, that *Ellison Begbie* was also the inspirer of its charming companion-song, *Mary Morison*. The character of "My dear E.," is displayed in every line of it:—

> "A thought ungentle canna be
> The thought of Peggy Ellison."

Only the two latter stanzas of the text, with the chorus, are given in Johnson's publication. The opening verse is from Cromek (1808). Stephen Clarke, the musical editor of the *Museum*, inscribed on the printer's copy of the music his feelings in these words:—"I am charmed with this song *almost* as much as the lover is with Peggy Alison."]

SONG—MARY MORISON.

(Currie, 1800.)

12

O Mary, at thy window be,
It is the wish'd, the trysted hour!
Those smiles and glances let me see,
That make the miser's treasure poor:
How blythely wad I bide the stoure,[a]
A weary slave frae sun to sun,
Could I the rich reward secure,
The lovely Mary Morison.

---

[a] turmoil.

Yestreen, when to the trembling string
The dance gaed thro' the lighted ha',
To thee my fancy took its wing,
I sat, but neither heard nor saw:
Tho' this was fair, and that was braw,[b]
And yon the toast of a' the town,
I sigh'd, and said amang them a',
"Ye are na Mary Morison."

Oh, Mary, canst thou wreck his peace,
Wha for thy sake wad gladly die?
Or canst thou break that heart of his,
Whase only faut is loving thee?
If love for love thou wilt na gie,
At least be pity to me shown;
A thought ungentle canna be
The thought o' Mary Morison."

[The long note to the preceding song will help to shorten this one, as it is held to apply to the same subject. The "trembling string," and the "lighted ha'" of the *second stanza* could in reality refer only to the earnest efforts of a poor fiddler at a village practising on the sanded floor of some school-room; yet see how the poet's fancy can "take its wing," and exalt the commonest object. Hazlitt says in respect to this lyric—"Of all the productions of Burns, the pathetic and serious love-songs which he has left behind him, in the manner of old ballads, are perhaps those which take the deepest and most lasting hold of the mind. Such are the lines to 'Mary Morison,' those beginning 'Here's a health to ane I loe dear;' and the song 'O my love is like a red, red, rose.'"

Duncan Davidson

The tune to which the poet composed this song was "~~Bide ye yet~~," which is capable of much pathos when performed in slow time. However, that air having been already well-suited with "canty" words, the late John Wilson, Scottish vocalist, conferred an accession of popularity to *Mary Morison* by wedding her to "The Miller," a beautiful tune of the same character as that selected by Burns.]

[b] gaily dressed.

WINTER: A DIRGE.

(KILMARNOCK ED., 1786.)

As I am what the men of the world, if they knew of such a man, would call a whimsical mortal, I have various sources of pleasure and enjoyment which are in a manner peculiar to myself, or some here and there such other out-of-the-way person. Such is the peculiar pleasure I take in the season of Winter more than the rest of the year. This, I believe, may be partly owing to my misfortunes giving my mind a melancholy cast; but there is something even in the

> "Mighty tempest and the hoary waste
> Abrupt and deep stretch'd o'er the buried earth,"

which raises the mind to a serious sublimity, favourable to every thing great and noble. There is scarcely any earthly object gives me more—I don't know if I should call it pleasure, but something which exalts me, something which enraptures me, than to walk in the sheltered side of a wood or high plantation in a cloudy winter day, and hear a stormy wind howling among the trees and raving o'er the plain. It is my best season for devotion; my mind is rapt up in a kind of enthusiasm to *Him* who, in the pompous language of Scripture, "walks on the wings of the wind." In one of these seasons, just after a tract of misfortunes, I composed the following song,—Tune, "M'Pherson's Farewell."—*Common-place Book, April* 1784.

THE wintry west extends his blast,
And hail and rain does blaw;
Or, the stormy north sends driving forth
The blinding sleet and snaw:
While,[1] tumbling brown, the burn comes down,
And roars frae bank to brae;
And bird and beast in covert rest,
And pass the heartless[2] day.

"The sweeping blast, the sky o'ercast,"*
The joyless winter day
Let others fear, to me more dear
Than all the pride of May:

---

* Dr Young.—*R. B.*

The tempest's howl, it soothes my soul,
My griefs it seems to join;
The leafless trees my fancy please,
Their fate resembles mine!

Thou Power Supreme whose mighty scheme
These woes of mine fulfil,
Here, firm I rest; they must be best,
Because they are *Thy* will!
Then all I want—O do Thou grant
This one request of mine!—
Since to *enjoy* Thou dost deny,
Assist me to *resign*.

[We concur with Chambers in assigning the date of this piece to the time of the poet's residence in Irvine, during the winter of 1781-82. Writing in April 1784, the author tells us that he composed it at the period referred to in his head-note to the following Prayer, "just after a tract of misfortunes." This corresponds with the tone of his melancholy letter to his father written from Irvine, and also with what he narrates in his autobiography, of his partner in trade having robbed him, and his flax-dressing shop taking fire on New Year's morning, 1782, by which he was left, "like a true poet, not worth a sixpence."

The variations in the Common-place Book are:—[1] And. [2] weary.

A PRAYER UNDER THE PRESSURE OF VIOLENT ANGUISH.

(EDINBURGH ED., 1787.)

There was a certain period of my life that my spirit was broke by repeated losses and disasters, which threatened and indeed affected the utter ruin of my fortune. My body, too, was attacked by that most dreadful distemper, a hypochondria, or confirmed melancholy; in this wretched state, the recollection of which makes me yet shudder, I hung

Bible
Ps. 137, 2

my harp on the willow trees, except in some lucid intervals, in one of which I composed the following :—

O Thou Great Being ! what Thou art,
  Surpasses[1] me to know ;
Yet sure I am, that known to Thee
  Are all Thy works[2] below.

Thy creature here before Thee stands,
  All wretched and distrest ;
Yet sure those ills that wring[3] my soul
  Obey Thy high behest.

Sure Thou, Almighty,[4] canst not act
  From cruelty or wrath !
O, free my weary eyes from tears,
  Or close them fast in death !

But, if I must afflicted be,
  To suit some wise design ;
Then[5] man my soul with firm resolves,
  To bear and not repine !

[The composition of these verses must be assigned to the same period as that of the foregoing. Writing in December 1787 to his Irvine acquaintance, Richard Brown, the poet thus remarked :—"Do you recollect the Sunday we spent together in Eglinton woods? You told me, on my repeating some verses to you, that you wondered I could resist the temptation of sending verses of such merit to a magazine. It was from this remark I derived that idea of my own pieces which encouraged me to endeavour at the character of a poet."

The variations in the Common-place Book are the following :—

[1] Surpassest. [2] all affairs. [3] press. [4] All-perfect. [5] O !]

O Thou great Being! what Thou art
Surpasseth me to know:
Yet sure I am that known to thee
Are all affairs below.

My creature here before thee stands,
All wretched & distrest:
Yet sure those ills that press my soul
Obey thy high behest.

Sure Thou Al Perfect canst not act
From cruelty, or wrath:
O! free my weary eyes from tears,
Or close them fast in death.

But if I must afflicted be
To suit some wise design;
O! man my soul with firm resolves
To bear and not repine.

Finis.

Facsimile from the M.S. of the Common Place Book
in possession of John Adam Esq Greenock

Bible
Nb.2

PARAPHRASE OF THE FIRST PSALM.

(EDINBURGH ED., 1787.)

THE man, in life wherever plac'd,
Hath happiness in store,
Who walks not in the wickeds' way,
Nor learns their guilty lore!

Nor from the seat of scornful pride
Casts forth his eyes abroad,
But with humility and awe
Still walks before his God.

That man shall flourish like the trees,
Which by the streamlets grow;
The fruitful top is spread on high,
And firm the root below.

But he whose blossom buds in guilt
Shall to the ground be cast,
And, like the rootless stubble, tost
Before the sweeping blast.

For why? that God the good adore,
Hath giv'n them peace and rest,
But hath decreed that wicked men
Shall ne'er be truly blest.

[This and the Psalm immediately following evidently belong to the same period of the author's life as the two preceding pieces.]

THE FIRST SIX VERSES OF THE NINETIETH PSALM VERSIFIED.

(Edinburgh Ed., 1787.)

O Thou, the first, the greatest friend
Of all the human race!
Whose strong right hand has ever been
Their stay and dwelling place!

Before the mountains heav'd their heads
Beneath Thy forming hand,
Before this ponderous[1] globe itself,
Arose at Thy command;

That Pow'r which rais'd and still upholds
This universal frame,
From countless, unbeginning time
Was ever still the same.

Those mighty periods of years
Which seem to us so vast,
Appear no more before Thy sight
Than yesterday that's past.

Thou giv'st the word: Thy creature, man,
Is to existence brought;
Again Thou say'st, "Ye sons of men,
Return ye into nought!"

Thou layest them, with[2] all their cares,
In everlasting[3] sleep;
As with a flood Thou tak'st them off
With overwhelming sweep.

They flourish like the morning flow'r,
In beauty's pride array'd;
But long ere night—cut down, it lies
All wither'd and decay'd.

[The following variations are found in a copy of this Paraphrase, exhibited on a framed folio sheet, in the poet's early manuscript, within his monument at Edinburgh :—

[1] mighty. [2] and [3] never-ending.]

A PRAYER IN THE PROSPECT OF DEATH.

(KILMARNOCK ED., 1786.)

O THOU unknown, Almighty Cause
Of all my hope and fear!
In whose dread presence, ere an hour,
Perhaps I must appear!

If I have wander'd in those paths
Of life I ought to shun—
As something, loudly, in my breast,
Remonstrates I have done—

Thou know'st that Thou hast formed me
With passions wild and strong;
And list'ning to their witching voice
Has often led me wrong.

Where human weakness has come short,
Or frailty stept aside,
Do Thou, All-Good—for such Thou art—
In shades of darkness hide.

Where with intention I have err'd,
No other plea I have,
But, Thou art good; and Goodness still
Delighteth to forgive.

[This composition appears, under the date August 1784, in the Common-place Book, as "A Prayer when fainting fits and other alarming symptoms of a pleurisy, or some other dangerous disorder, which indeed still threaten me, *first* put nature on the alarm." These words distinctly point back to a date more or less remote; consequently those editors who have assumed this Prayer and its relative prose passage to apply to the Mossgiel period of the author's life are at fault in their chronology. The verses are marked by extraordinary vigour, and have been much criticised by those who will be content with no religious poetry, except such as deals in substitutional salvation.

A recent reverend annotator has remarked that "these verses are indication of a contrition for sin, that in the mouth of any other confessor (even St Augustine) would be attributed by the most scrupulous judges to the influence of the Holy Ghost."]

STANZAS, ON THE SAME OCCASION.

(Edinburgh Ed., 1787.)

Why am I loth to leave this earthly scene?
Have I so found it full of pleasing charms—
Some drops of joy with draughts of ill between—
Some gleams of sunshine 'mid[1] renewing storms?
Is it departing pangs my soul[2] alarms?
Or death's unlovely, dreary, dark abode?
For guilt, for guilt, my terrors are in arms:
I tremble to approach an angry God,
And justly smart beneath His sin-avenging rod.

Fain would I say, "Forgive my foul offence!"
Fain promise never more to disobey;[3]
But, should my Author health again dispense,
Again I might[4] desert fair virtue's way;

Again in folly's path might go astray ;[5]
  Again exalt the brute and sink the man ;
Then how should[6] I for heavenly mercy pray,
  Who act so counter heavenly mercy's plan ?
Who sin so oft have mourn'd, yet[7] to temptation ran ?

O Thou great Governor of all below !
  If I may dare a lifted eye to Thee,[8]
Thy nod[9] can make the tempest cease to blow,
  Or still the tumult of the raging sea :
With that controlling pow'r assist ev'n me,
  Those headlong furious passions to confine,
For all unfit I feel my pow'rs to be,[10]
  To rule their torrent in th' allowèd line ;
O, aid me with Thy help, Omnipotence Divine !

[This composition is set down in the poet's Common-place Book immediately following the preceding, and entitled "Misgivings in the Hour of Despondency and Prospect of Death." He copied it from thence into the Stair manuscript of early pieces (now dismembered and scattered abroad). It is there headed—"Misgivings of Despondency on the Approach of the Gloomy Monarch of the Grave." It was also inserted in the manuscript book of like pieces presented to Mrs Dunlop, under the heading—"Stanzas on the same occasion (as the preceding) in the manner of *Beattie's Minstrel*." That collection is also cut up and scattered ; and these verses, apparently once forming part of it, are exhibited within the Burns monument at Edinburgh. On comparing the copy in the text with the earlier ones, we find that the versification underwent some polishing in 1787, to fit it for appearance in the author's Edinburgh edition.

This piece acquires a certain interest from the manner in which Dr John Brown (author of "Rab and his Friends") has introduced an anecdote concerning it in his little book—"Pet Marjorie : a Story of Child Life Fifty Years Ago" (1863).

The variations in the early manuscripts are as follow :—

[1] midst. [2] heart. [3] Forgive where I so oft have gone astray.
[4] would. [5] Again to passions I would fall a prey.
[5] with passions would be led astray. [6] can.
[7] then. [8] If one so black with crimes dare call on Thee. [9] breath.
[9] rod. [10] unfit my native powèrs be. [10] feel my powèrs be.]

FICKLE FORTUNE.—"A FRAGMENT."

(Cromek, 1808.)

Though fickle Fortune has deceived me,
She promis'd fair and perform'd but ill;
Of mistress, friends, and wealth bereav'd me,
Yet I bear a heart shall support me still.—

I'll act with prudence as far as I'm able,
But if success I must never find,
Then come misfortune, I bid thee welcome,
I'll meet thee with an undaunted mind.

[The poet has set this down in his Common-place Book, under date, September 1785, and thus remarks:—"The above was an extempore, under the pressure of a heavy train of misfortunes, which indeed threatened to undo me altogether. It was just at the close of that dreadful period mentioned, [when the prayer 'O Thou great Being,' was composed—see p. 30,] and though the weather has brightened up a little with me, yet there has always been since, a 'tempest brewing round me in the grim sky' of futurity, which I pretty plainly see will some time or other—perhaps ere long—overwhelm me, and drive me into some doleful dell to pine in solitary, squalid wretchedness."

The reader has already seen, at page 7, the four lines which form the first half of the above fragment. The poet here reproduces them with an important variation in line third, which he appropriately alters from

"Of many a joy and hope bereav'd me."

These eight lines altogether read more like rough prose than measured verse; they have at the same time a certain earnest vigour, and in sentiment are in unison with all he wrote at that period. He says the fragment was constructed "in imitation of an old Scotch song well known among the country ingle-sides," and of that he quotes one verse thus—

"When clouds in skies do come together,
To hide the brightness of the sun,
There will surely be some pleasant weather
When a' thir storms are spent and gone."

He tells us that he has noted that verse "both to mark the song and tune I mean, and likewise as a debt I owe to the author, as the repeating of that verse has lighted up my flame a thousand times."]

RAGING FORTUNE—FRAGMENT OF SONG.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

O RAGING Fortune's withering blast
Has laid my leaf full low!
O raging Fortune's withering blast
Has laid my leaf full low!

My stem was fair, my bud was green,
My blossom sweet did blow;
The dew fell fresh, the sun rose mild,
And made my branches grow;

But luckless Fortune's northern storms
Laid a' my blossoms low,—
But luckless Fortune's northern storms
Laid a' my blossoms low!

[This sketch was produced at the same time with the preceding Our poet records in his Common-place Book that he then "set about composing an air in the old Scotch style. I am (he adds) not musical scholar enough to prick down my tune properly, so it can never see the light, . . . but these were the verses I composed to suit it." As we do with the verses at page 40, we omit the capital letter "O" at the end of every second line, to avoid the unpleasant effect in reading.]

IMPROMPTU—"I'LL GO AND BE A SODGER."

(CURRIE, 1800.)

O WHY the deuce should I repine,
And be an ill foreboder?
I'm twenty-three, and five feet nine,
I'll go and be a sodger!

I gat some gear wi' mickle care,
I held it weel thegither;
But now it's gane, and something mair—
I'll go and be a sodger!

[This is the sequel to the poet's previous penitential bemoanings, and apostrophes to "Fickle Fortune." "Come, stubborn pride and unshrinking resolution!"—he wrote to a lady friend, on receipt of what he deemed ruinous intelligence—"accompany me through this, to me, miserable world! Your friendship I think I can count on, though I should date my letters from a marching regiment. Early in life, and all my life, I reckoned on a recruiting drum as my forlorn hope."

The poet was now at home from Irvine. He reached Lochlie about the end of March; and Chambers mentions, in 1856, that the stone chimney-piece of the little garret room where Burns slept in his father's house still bore the initials "R. B.," with the date 1782, supposed to have been cut by the poet's own hand. That relic no longer exists.]

SONG—"NO CHURCHMAN AM I."

Tune—"Prepare, my dear Brethren."

(EDINBURGH ED., 1787.)

No churchman am I for to rail and to write,
No statesman nor soldier to plot or to fight,
No sly man of business contriving a snare,
For a big-belly'd bottle's the whole of my care.

The peer I don't envy, I give him his bow;
I scorn not the peasant, tho' ever so low;
But a club of good fellows, like those that are here,
And a bottle like this, are my glory and care.

Here passes the squire on his brother—his horse;
There centum per centum, the cit with his purse;
But see you the *Crown* how it waves in the air?
There a big-belly'd bottle still eases my care.

The wife of my bosom, alas! she did die;
For sweet consolation to church I did fly;
I found that old Solomon provèd it fair,
That a big-belly'd bottle 's a cure for all care.

I once was persuaded a venture to make;
A letter inform'd me that all was to wreck;
But the pursy old landlord just waddl'd up stairs,
With a glorious bottle that ended my cares.

"Life's cares they are comforts" *—a maxim laid down
By the Bard, what d'ye call him? that wore the black gown;
And faith I agree with th' old prig to a hair;
For a big-belly'd bottle's a heav'n of a care.

A STANZA ADDED IN A MASON LODGE.

Then fill up a bumper and make it o'erflow,
And honours masonic prepare for to throw;
May ev'ry true Brother of the Compass and Square
Have a big-belly'd bottle when harass'd[1] with care.

[We are inclined to set this down as a production of 1782. The Bachelors' Club was instituted at the close of 1780, and the poet was admitted an apprentice Free Mason in July 1781, just before he proceeded to Irvine. He was passed and raised on 1st October following, on which occasion, if he was present at Tarbolton, he must have travelled from Irvine for the purpose.

The song in the text has none of the elements of popularity in it, and seems more like an imitation of an English song, than a spontaneous outburst of his own genius. Indeed in the collection of songs which he studied so much during his boyhood, there is one that appears to have been his model: the closing line of one of its stanzas being

"And a big-belly'd bottle's a mighty good thing."

VAR. [1] Pressèd, in all editions prior to 1793.]

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* Young's "Night Thoughts."—*R. B.*

BALLAD—MY FATHER WAS A FARMER.

Tune—"The weaver and his shuttle, O."

(Cromek, 1808.)

My father was a farmer upon the Carrick border,[1]
And carefully he bred me in decency and order;
He bade me act a manly part, though I had ne'er a farthing;
For without an honest manly heart, no man was worth regarding.

Then out into the world my course I did determine;
Tho' to be rich was not my wish, yet to be great was charming:
My talents they were not the worst, nor yet my education:
Resolv'd was I, at least to try, to mend my situation.

In many a way, and vain essay, I courted Fortune's favour;
Some cause unseen still stept between, to frustrate each endeavour;
Sometimes by foes I was o'erpower'd, sometimes by friends forsaken;
And when my hope was at the top, I still was worst mistaken.

Then sore harass'd, and tir'd at last, with Fortune's vain delusion,
I dropt my schemes, like idle dreams, and came to this conclusion:
The past was bad, and the future hid, its good or ill untrièd;
But the present hour was in my pow'r, and so I would enjoy it.

No help, nor hope, nor view had I, nor person to befriend
me ;
So I must toil, and sweat, and moil,[2] and labour to sustain
me ;
To plough and sow, to reap and mow, my father bred me
early ;
For one, he said, to labour bred, was a match for Fortune
fairly.

Thus all obscure, unknown, and poor, thro' life I'm doom'd
to wander,
Till down my weary bones I lay in everlasting slumber ;
No view nor care, but shun whate'er might breed me pain
or sorrow ;
I live to-day as well's I may, regardless of to-morrow.

But cheerful still, I am as well as a monarch in his palace,
Tho' Fortune's frown still hunts me down, with all her
wonted malice :
I make indeed my daily bread, but ne'er can make it
farther :
But as daily bread is all I need, I do not much regard her.

When sometimes by my labour, I earn a little money,
Some unforeseen misfortune comes gen'rally upon me ;
Mischance, mistake, or by neglect, or my goodnatur'd folly:
But come what will, I've sworn it still, I'll ne'er be
melancholy.

All you who follow wealth and power with unremitting
ardour,
The more in this you look for bliss, you leave your view the
farther :

Had you the wealth Potosi boasts, or nations to adore you,
A cheerful honest-hearted clown I will prefer before you.

[The poet describes the above as "a wild rhapsody, miserably deficient in versification, but as the sentiments are the genuine feelings of my heart, for that reason I have a particular pleasure in conning it over."

[1] Here, and at the close of each line of the ballad, the letter "O" is introduced in the Author's MS. to make it fit the tune to which he composed it. It has a disturbing effect in reading, and therefore we withdraw it from our text for the present. In an after part of the work the verses will be given verbatim, as part of the Common-place Book.

[2] "moil" in the MS., but "broil" in Cromek.]

JOHN BARLEYCORN: A BALLAD.*

(EDINBURGH ED., 1787.)

THERE was three kings into the east,
Three kings both great and high,
And they hae sworn a solemn oath
[1] John Barleycorn should die.

They took[2] a plough and plough'd him down,
Put clods upon his head,
And they hae sworn a solemn oath
John Barleycorn was dead.

But the cheerful Spring came kindly[3] on,
And show'rs began to fall;
John Barleycorn got up again,
And sore surpris'd them all.

The sultry suns of Summer came,[4]
And he grew thick and strong;
His head weel arm'd wi' pointed spears,
That no one should him wrong.

* This is partly composed on the plan of an old song known by the same name.—*R. B.*

The sober Autumn enter'd mild,[5]
When[6] he grew wan and pale;
His bending joints and drooping head
Show'd he began to fail.

His colour sicken'd more and more,
He faded into age;
And then his enemies began
To show their deadly rage.

They've taen a weapon,[7] long and sharp,
And cut him by the knee;
Then ty'd him fast upon a cart,
Like a rogue for forgerie.

They laid him down upon his back,
And cudgell'd him full sore;
They hung him up before the storm,
And turn'd him o'er and o'er.

They filled up a darksome pit
With water to the brim,
They heavèd in John Barleycorn—
There, let him sink or swim.

They laid him out[8] upon the floor,
To work him farther woe;
And still, as signs of life appear'd,
They toss'd him to and fro.

They wasted, o'er a scorching flame,
The marrow of his bones;
But a[9] miller us'd him worst of all,
For he crush'd him between two stones.

And they hae taen his very heart's blood,
And drank it round and round ;
And still the more and more they drank,
Their joy did more abound.

John Barleycorn was a hero bold,
Of noble enterprise ;
For if you do but taste his blood,
'Twill make your courage rise.

'Twill make a man forget his woe ;
'Twill[10] heighten all his joy :
'Twill make the widow's heart to sing,
Tho' the tear were in her eye.

Then let us toast John Barleycorn,
Each man a glass in hand ;
And may his great posterity
Ne'er fail in old Scotland !

[In the Common-place Book, this is set down immediately before *Poor Mailie*, and all that we know concerning the date of the two poems is that they were written at Lochlie, prior to the year 1784. Gilbert has said regarding the date of the latter that his two younger brothers William and John, then acted as *drivers* in the ploughing operations of the poet and himself. John, in 1782, would be thirteen years old—a very likely age for him to commence duties of that kind ; so by this mode of calculation we arrive at a fair conclusion, were we to hold that *John Barleycorn* and *Poor Mailie* were composed shortly after Burns' return from Irvine in the early spring of 1782. It is not likely that the poet ever saw the ancient ballad of "John Barleycorn" in any collection. A copy in the Pepys' library at Cambridge furnished the old version included by Robert Jamieson in his collection of Ballads, 2 vols., 1808. In the poet's note to the Ballad he says :—"I once heard the old song that goes by this name sung, and being very fond of it, and remembering only two or three verses of it, viz., the 1st, 2d, and 3d, with some scraps, I have interwoven them here and there in the following piece." The poet could never be induced to correct the defective grammar in the opening line, deeming, we suppose, with Shakespeare,

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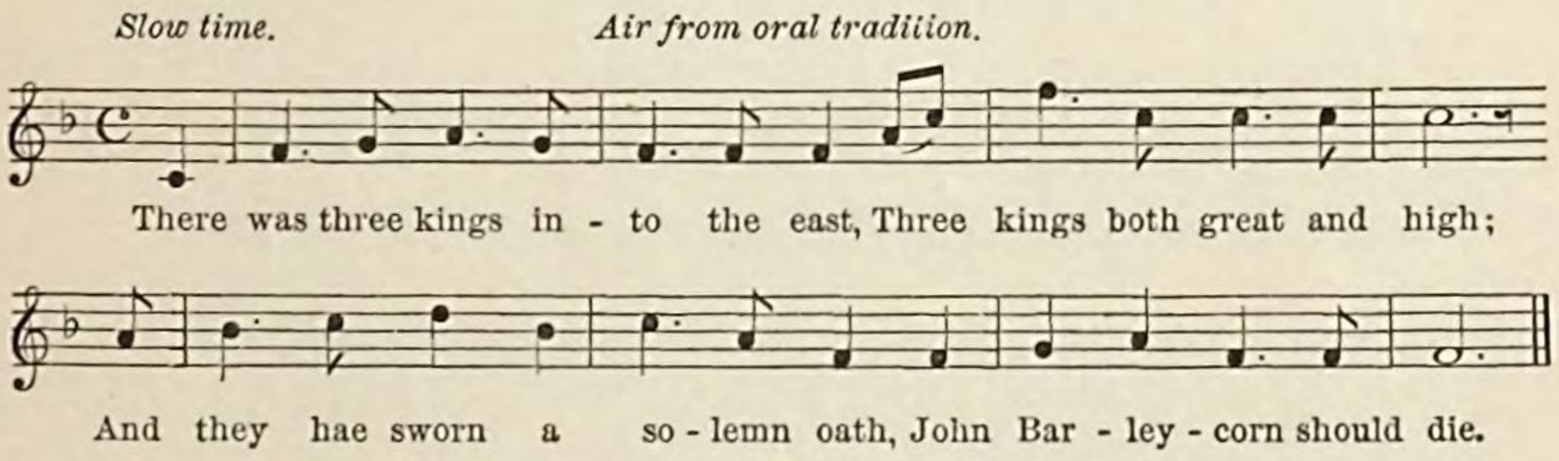
Shakespeare

that bad grammar is sometimes a positive beauty. James Hogg had the same feeling in regard to his favourite song "When the kye *comes* hame." In another of Burns' most admired Ballads,—"There *was* five Carlines in the south"—evidently composed on the model of *John Barleycorn*—he retains the "bad grammar" and directs the song to be sung to the tune of *Chevy Chase*. We cannot tell whether that air was the same above referred to, which he "once heard sung." In our youth we used to hear *John Barleycorn* sung, and to this day the tune rings in our ears. We never saw it in print, and lest it should be lost to the world, we here set it down.

The variations from the Common-place Book are as follow:—

[1] That John Barleycorn. [2] They've taen. [3] The Spring time it came on.
[4] The Summer it came on. [5] The Autumn it came on. [6] And.
[7] They took a hook was. [8] They've thrown him out. [9] the miller. [10] And.]

THE DEATH AND DYING WORDS OF POOR MAILIE,

THE AUTHOR'S ONLY[1] PET YOWE,—AN UNCO MOURNFU' TALE.

(KILMARNOCK ED., 1786.)

As Mailie, an' her lambs thegither,
Was[2] ae day nibblin on the tether,
Upon her cloot[a] she coost[b] a hitch,
An' owre she warsl'd[c] in the ditch:
There, groanin, dying, she did lie,
When *Hughoc** he cam doytin[d] by.

[a] hoof. [b] cast. [c] fell struggling. [d] walking stupidly.

* A neibour herd-callant, about three-fourths as wise as other folk.—*R. B.*

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Wi' glowrin[e] een, and lifted han's
Poor *Hughoc* like a statue stan's ;
He saw her days were near-hand ended,
But, wae's my heart ! he could na mend it !
He gaped wide, but naething spak,
At length poor Mailie silence brak.

" O thou, whase lamentable face
Appears to mourn my woefu' case !
My dying words attentive hear,
An' bear them to my Master dear.

" Tell him, if e'er again he keep
As muckle gear[f] as buy a sheep—
O, bid him never tie them mair,
Wi' wicked strings o' hemp or hair !
But ca' them out to park or hill,
An' let them wander at their will :
So may his flock increase, an' grow
To scores o' lambs, and packs o' woo' !

" Tell him, he was a Master kin',
An' ay was guid to me an' mine ;
An' now my dying charge I gie him,
My helpless lambs, I trust them wi' him.

" O, bid him save their harmless lives,
Frae dogs, an' tods,[g] an' butchers' knives !
But gie them guid cow-milk[3] their fill,
Till they be fit to fend themsel ;
An' tent them duly, e'en an' morn,
Wi' taets[h] o' hay an' ripps[i] o' corn.

---

[e] staring. [f] cash. [g] foxes. [h] small quantities. [i] handfuls.

"An' may they never learn the gaets,[j]
Of ither vile, wanrestfu'[k] pets—
To slink thro' slaps, an' reave an' steal,
At stacks o' pease, or stocks o' kail!
So may they, like their great[4] forbears,
For monie a year come thro' the sheers:
So wives will gie them bits o' bread,
An' bairns greet for them when they're dead.

"My poor toop-lamb, my son an' heir,
O, bid him breed him up wi' care!
An' if he live to be a beast,
To pit some havins[l] in his breast!

"An' warn him—what I winna name[5]
To stay content wi' yowes at hame;
An' no to rin an' wear his cloots,
Like ither menseless,[m] graceless brutes.

"An' niest, my yowie, silly thing,
Gude keep thee frae a tether string!
O, may thou ne'er forgather up,
Wi' ony blastit, moorland toop;
But ay keep mind to moop[n] an' mell,[o]
Wi' sheep o' credit like thysel!

"And now, my bairns, wi' my last breath,
I lea'e my blessin wi' you baith:
An' when you think upo'[6] your mither,
Mind to be kind to ane anither.

---

[j] ways. [k] restless. [l] manners.
[m] unmannerly. [n] fondle. [o] associate.

"Now, honest *Hughoc*, dinna fail,
To tell my master a' my tale;
An' bid him burn this cursed tether,
An' for thy pains thou'se get my blather."[p]

This said, poor Mailie turn'd her head,
An' clos'd her een amang the dead!

[Carlyle considers this the poet's happiest effort of its peculiar kind: he classes it with the *Address to a Mouse*, and the *Auld Farmer's Mare*, but holds that "this has even more of sportive tenderness in it." It was composed—just as we now see it—one afternoon while engaged with his plough on the slopes of Lochlie, his brother Gilbert being at work with his team on another part of the field. The poet's youngest brother *John*—of whose early death, by the way, not a syllable has been ever heard—drove the horses, while the musing bard guided his plough in the even rig. Gilbert narrates the incident to this effect:—As they were setting out about noon, with their teams, a curious-looking, awkward boy, named Hugh Wilson, ran up to them in a very excited manner, and with a rueful countenance, announced that poor Mailie had got entangled in her tether and was lying in the ditch. It had never occurred to the terror-stricken "Huoc" that he might have lent a hand in lifting her up: Mailie, however, was soon rescued from her peril and lived—it is hoped—to see her bairns' bairns. This timely intervention of the half-witted callant was the means of sending down the name of poor Mailie along with his own to distant posterity; for his comical consternation and pathetic interest in her fate suggested the poem to Burns.

The variations here annexed are from the Common-place Book:—

[1] MY AIN. [2] Were. [3] het milk. [4] auld.
[5] ay at ridin time. [6] ever mind your mither.]

---

[p] bladder.

POOR MAILIE'S ELEGY.

15.

(KILMARNOCK ED., 1786.)

LAMENT in rhyme, lament in prose,
Wi' saut tears tricklin down your nose;
Our bardie's fate is at a close,
Past a' remead!
The last, sad cape-stane o' his woe's
Poor Mailie's dead!

It's no the loss o' warl's gear,
That could sae bitter draw the tear,
Or mak our bardie, dowie, wear
The mournin weed:
He's lost a friend an' neebor dear,
In Mailie dead.

Thro' a' the town she trotted by him;
A lang half-mile she could descry him;
Wi' kindly bleat, when she did spy him,
She ran wi' speed:
A friend mair faithfu' ne'er cam nigh him,
Than Mailie dead.

I wat she was a sheep o' sense,
An' could behave hersel wi' mense:[a]
I'll say't, she never brak a fence,
Thro' thievish greed.
Our bardie, lanely, keeps the spence[b]
Sin' Mailie's dead.

---

[a] good manners. [b] inner room.

Or, if he wanders up the howe,[c]
Her livin image in her yowe
Comes bleatin till him, owre the knowe,[d]
For bits o' bread;
An' down the briny pearls rowe
For Mailie dead.

She was nae get[e] o' moorlan tips,[f]
Wi' tauted ket,[g] an' hairy hips;
For her forbears[h] were brought in ships,
Frae 'yont the Tweed:
A bonier fleesh ne'er cross'd the clips
Than Mailie's—dead.

Wae worth that man wha first did shape
That vile, wanchancie[i] thing—a raep!
It maks guid fellows girn an' gape,
Wi' chokin dread;
An' Robin's bonnet wave wi' crape
For Mailie dead.

O, a' ye bards on bonie Doon!
An' wha on Ayr your chanters tune!
Come, join the melancholious croon
O' Robin's reed!
His heart will never get aboon—
His Mailie's dead!

[That this poem was composed at a period somewhat later than the "Dying Words," is probable from the fact that the "Elegy" is not inscribed in the poet's Common-place Book, while the main poem is recorded there, almost verbatim as afterwards published. Dr Currie informs us (Vol. III., p. 395, Ed. 1801), that in preparing the "Elegy"

---

[c] valley. [d] knoll. [e] offspring. [f] rams.
[g] matted fleece. [h] ancestors. [i] unlucky.

for the press, the poet substituted the present sixth verse for the following:—

"She was nae get o' runted rams,
Wi' woo like goats, and legs like trams:
She was the flower o' Fairlie lambs—
A famous breed;
Now Robin, greetin, chews the hams,
O' Mailie dead."

The substituted stanza is doubtless a great improvement; yet we cannot but regret with Currie that "Fairlie lambs" should lose the honour once intended for them. Fairlie was the first place in Ayrshire where the poet's father in early manhood obtained employment.]

SONG—THE RIGS O' BARLEY.

(KILMARNOCK ED., 1786.)

IT was upon a Lammas night,
When corn rigs are bonie,
Beneath the moon's unclouded light,
I held awa to Annie;
The time flew by, wi' tentless heed;
Till, 'tween the late and early,
Wi' sma' persuasion she agreed
To see me thro' the barley.
Corn rigs, an' barley rigs,
An' corn rigs are bonie:
I'll ne'er forget that happy night,
Amang the rigs wi' Annie.

The sky was blue, the wind was still,
The moon was shining clearly;
I set her down, wi' right good will,
Amang the rigs o' barley:
I ken't her heart was a' my ain;
I lov'd her most sincerely;
I kiss'd her owre and owre again,
Amang the rigs o' barley.
Corn rigs, an' barley rigs, &c.

I lock'd her in my fond embrace;
Her heart was beating rarely:
My blessings on that happy place,
Amang the rigs o' barley!
But by the moon and stars so bright,
That shone that hour so clearly!
She ay shall bless that happy night
Amang the rigs o' barley.
Corn rigs, an' barley rigs, &c.

I hae been blythe wi' comrades dear;
I hae been merry drinking;
I hae been joyfu' gath'rin gear;
I hae been happy thinking:
But a' the pleasures e'er I saw,
Tho' three times doubl'd fairly—
That happy night was worth them a',
Amang the rigs o' barley.
Corn rigs, an' barley rigs, &c.

[We conceive that we cannot be far wrong in setting down this and the four songs which immediately follow as compositions of the period from the summer of 1782 to the close of 1783, when the Burnes family was preparing to remove to Mossgiel, and old William Burnes was about to bid them all farewell for ever. Many of the "Annies" of the district have contended for the dubious honour of being the heroine of this warmly coloured, yet highly popular, lyric. The name of Anne Ronald has been mentioned; but, as we have already seen, the poet was content to admire her at a respectful distance. Anne Rankine, daughter of a farmer at Adamhill, within two miles west of Lochlie, and who afterwards became Mrs Merry, not only "owned the soft impeachment," but to her dying day boasted that she was the Annie of the "Rigs o' Barley." If so, then Gilbert was right when he told Dr Currie that "there was often a great disparity between the fair captivator and her attributes" as depicted in song by her lover.

Our poet is said to have, on more than one occasion in after-life, referred to the closing verse of this song as one of his happiest strokes of workmanship.]

SONG—"COMPOSED IN AUGUST."

(KILMARNOCK ED., 1786.)

Now westlin winds and slaught'ring guns
  Bring Autumn's pleasant weather;
The moorcock[1] springs on whirring wings,
  Amang the blooming heather:
Now waving grain, wide o'er the plain,
  Delights the weary farmer;
And the moon shines bright, when I rove at night,
  To muse upon my charmer.

The partridge loves[2] the fruitful fells,
  The plover loves[2] the mountains;
The woodcock haunts the lonely dells,
  The soaring hern the fountains:
Thro' lofty groves the cushat roves,
  The path of man to shun it;
The hazel bush o'erhangs the thrush,
  The spreading thorn the linnet.

Thus ev'ry kind their pleasure find,
  The savage and the tender;
Some social join, and leagues combine,
  Some solitary wander:
Avaunt, away, the cruel sway!
  Tyrannic man's dominion;
The sportsman's joy, the murd'ring cry,
  The flutt'ring, gory pinion!

But, Peggy dear, the ev'ning's clear,
  Thick flies the skimming swallow;

The sky is blue, the fields in view,
All fading-green and yellow :
Come let us stray our gladsome way,
And view the charms of Nature ;
The rustling corn, the fruited thorn,
And ev'ry[3] happy creature.

We'll gently walk, and sweetly talk,
Till[4] the silent moon shine[5] clearly ;
I'll grasp[6] thy waist, and, fondly prest,
Swear how I love thee dearly :
Not vernal show'rs to budding flow'rs,
Not Autumn to the farmer,
So dear can be as thou to me,
My fair, my lovely charmer !

[This is "Song Second" (of the author's Edinburgh edition), referred to in his autobiography as "the ebullition of that passion which ended the school business" at Kirkoswald. If the lyric was suggested and partly sketched out when the poet was but in his seventeenth year, we are assured, on the testimony of Mrs Begg, that at a considerably later period he experienced another love-fit for Kirkoswald Peggy, and corresponded with her, with a view to matrimony. It would be then that he dressed up this finely descriptive composition into its existing form ; but as he soon thereafter fell into grief about the subject of his epistle to Rankine, he was forced to abandon the idea of matrimony with Peggy.

We shall again have occasion to advert to this very early inspirer of the poet's passion, when, under date 1786, we give the verses he inscribed on a presentation copy to her of his first edition. Among the bard's letters also will be given one addressed by him to an early Carrick friend, Mr Thomas Orr, Park, dated 11th Nov. 1784, which throws some light on the present subject.

The variations in the Common-place Book the reader has already got at page 3. The poet sent the song to Johnson in 1792, with the following touches of alteration :—

[1] gor-cock. [2] loes. [3] ilka. [4] While. [5] shines. [6] clasp.]

SONG—"MY NANIE, O."

(EDINBURGH ED., 1787.)

BEHIND yon hills where Lugar* flows,
'Mang moors an' mosses many, O,
The wintry[1] sun the day has clos'd,
And I'll awa to Nanie, O.

The westlin wind blaws loud an' shill;
The night's baith mirk[2] and rainy, O;
But I'll get my plaid an' out I'll steal,
An' owre the hill to Nanie, O.

My Nanie's charming, sweet, an' young;
Nae artfu' wiles to win ye, O:
May ill befa' the flattering tongue
That wad beguile my Nanie, O.

Her face is fair, her heart is true;
As spotless as she's bonie, O;
The op'ning gowan, wat wi' dew,
Nae purer is than Nanie, O.

A country lad is my degree,
An' few there be that ken me, O;
But what care I how few they be,
I'm welcome ay to Nanie, O.

My riches a's my penny-fee,
An' I maun guide it cannie, O;
But warl's gear ne'er troubles me,
My thoughts are a'—my[3] Nanie, O.

---

* "Stinchar," in all the author's editions, including that of 1794; but George Thomson says the poet sanctioned the change in 1792.

Our auld[4] guidman delights to view
His sheep an' kye[5] thrive bonie O;
But I'm as blythe that hauds his pleugh,
An' has nae care but Nanie, O.

Come weel, come woe, I care na by;
I'll tak what Heav'n will sen' me, O:
Nae ither care in life have I,
But live, an' love my Nanie, O.

[The author, in his Common-place Book, directs this song to be sung to the tune of "As I came in by London, O," which no doubt would be the opening line of some then popular, but now unknown English song, set to the old Scotch air, "My Nanie, O."

A vast deal has been written and said concerning the heroineship of this song. The Rev. Hamilton Paul, who belonged to Ayrshire, and was almost a contemporary of Burns, thus wrote in 1819:—"In Kilmarnock, Burns first saw 'Nanie,' the subject of one of his most popular ballads. She captivated him as well by the charms of her person as by the melody of her voice. As he devoted much of his spare time to her society, and listened to her singing with the most religious attention, her sister observed to him, that he paid more attention to Nanie's singing than he would do to a preaching; he retorted with an oath—'Madam, there's no comparison.'" On the other hand, Gilbert Burns, who was aware that the song was composed before his brother ever spent an hour in Kilmarnock, informed George Thomson, that "Nanie was a farmer's daughter in Tarbolton parish, named Fleming, to whom the poet paid some of that roving attention which he was continually devoting to some one. Her charms were indeed mediocre, and what she had were sexual, which indeed was the characteristic of the greater part of his mistresses. He was no Platonic lover, whatever he might pretend or suppose of himself."

Allan Cunningham and other annotators have, through a misconception of the opening lines of the song, run away with the notion that Nanie belonged to Carrick, like the subject of the preceding lyric. But when we have the poet himself confessing that *Vive l'amour, et vive la bagatelle* were his "sole principles of action," and that when the labours of each day were over, he "spent the evening in the way after his own heart," we must conclude that his rural divinities were not far to seek. It is by no means requisite that the inspirer of this picture of rustic purity should have been named "Nanie." Here the poet sets himself to clothe with suitable words one of our most popular native melodies, and unless he had closed each verse with the familiar name—"My Nanie, O," nothing that he could have composed for it could have answered the purpose so well.

Green grow the rashes— O
Green grow the rashes— O
The sweetest hours that e'er I spend
Are spent among the lasses— O

There's nought but care on ev'ry hand
In ev'ry hour that passes— O
What signifies the life o' man
An' 'twere na for the lasses— O

Green grow &c.

The warly race may riches chase
An' riches still may fly them— O
An' tho. at last they catch them fast
Their hearts can ne'er enjoy them— O

Green grow &c.

But gie me a canny hour at e'en
My arms about my dearie— O
An' warly cares an' warly men
May a' go tapsalteerie— O

Green grow &c.

For you that's douse an' sneers at this
Ye're nought but senseless asses— O
The wisest man the warl' saw
He dearly lov'd the Lasses— O

Gran-grow &c,

Facsimile from the M.S. of the Common-Place Book
in possession of John Adam Esq. Greenock

The early copy in the Common-place Book does not materially differ from that afterwards published; but at the end of verse first, and at the close of the song he gives the following chorus :—

"And O my bonie Nanie, O,
My young, my handsome Nanie, O;
Tho' I had the world all at my will,
I would give it all for[6] Nanie, O."

The other variations are :—

[1] weary. [2] dark. [3] about. [4] "auld" omitted. [5] his kye. [6] to.]

SONG—GREEN GROW THE RASHES.

(EDINBURGH ED., 1787.)

Chor.—Green grow the rashes, O;
Green grow the rashes, O;
The sweetest hours that e'er I spend,
Are spent among the lasses, O.

THERE'S nought but care on ev'ry han',
In every hour that passes, O:
What signifies the life o' man,
An' 'twere na for the lasses, O.
Green grow, &c.

The war'ly race may riches chase,
An' riches still may fly them, O;
An' tho' at last they catch them fast,
Their hearts can ne'er enjoy them, O.
Green grow, &c.

But gie me a cannie[a] hour at e'en,
My arms about my dearie, O;
An' war'ly cares, an' war'ly men,
May a' gae tapsalteerie,[b] O!
Green grow, &c.

[a] snug. [b] topsy-turvy.

For you sae douce,[c] ye sneer[1] at this ;
Ye're nought but senseless asses, O :
The wisest man the warl' e'er[2] saw,
He dearly lov'd the lasses, O.
Green grow, &c.

Auld Nature swears, the lovely dears
Her noblest work she classes, O :
Her prentice han' she try'd on man,
An' then she made the lasses, O.
Green grow, &c.

[The author has nowhere given an indication of the date of this widely popular song. He entered it among other early pieces in his Common-place Book in August 1784. It may have been then just composed; but a Tarbolton contemporary spoke of it to Chambers, as a Lochlie production, in these terms:—"Burns composed a song on almost every tolerable-looking lass in the parish, and finally one in which he embraced them all." It is certain, however, that its crowning stanza—the last one—was not added till a much later date, perhaps not till he brushed up the song to appear in his Edinburgh volume of 1787. This is proved by the fact that in his early manuscript copies that verse is wanting. cfo. IV. 372.

The poet's son Robert, during the period of his retirement in Dumfries, used, in connection with this song, to repeat a stanza added by himself, which deserves preservation as a happy sequel to his father's idea in the closing verse. It is as follows:—

"Frae man's ain side the form was made
That a' God's wark surpasses, O ;
Man only loes his ain heart's-bluid
Wha dearly loves the lasses, O."

The early variations are only in the fourth verse :—

[1] For you that's douse, and sneers at this. [2] the warl' saw.

In all the author's printed copies, except in the *Museum*, the word *spend* in line third of the chorus is altered to "spent," to the detriment of the poet's grammar. We therefore adhere to the *Museum* copy in that particular, which corresponds with the MS. of the Common-place Book.]

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[c] grave, stolid.

SONG—"INDEED WILL I," QUO' FINDLAY.

Tune—"Lass, an I come near thee."

(JOHNSON'S MUSEUM, 1792.)

"WHA is that at my bower-door?"
'O wha is it but Findlay!'
"Then gae your gate, ye 'se nae be here:"
'Indeed maun I,' quo' Findlay,
"What make ye, sae like a thief?"
'O come and see,' quo' Findlay;
"Before the morn ye'll work mischief"—
'Indeed will I,' quo' Findlay.

"Gif I rise and let you in"—
'Let me in,' quo' Findlay,
"Ye'll keep me waukin wi' your din"—
'Indeed will I,' quo' Findlay,
"In my bower if ye should stay"—
'Let me stay,' quo' Findlay;
"I fear ye'll bide till break o' day"—
'Indeed will I,' quo' Findlay.

"Here this night if ye remain"—
'I'll remain,' quo' Findlay;
"I dread ye'll learn the gaite again"—
'Indeed will I,' quo' Findlay.
"What may pass within this bower"—
'Let it pass,' quo' Findlay;
"Ye maun conceal till your last hour"—
'Indeed will I,' quo' Findlay.

[We consider ourselves justifiable in recording this as a production of the Lochlie period of the author's life. Gilbert Burns assured Cromek that his brother composed it in emulation of a piece in Ramsay's Tea-table Miscellany, called "The auld man's best argument." An old

woman in Tarbolton, named Jean Wilson, used to divert him and his companions by singing it with great effect; and Gilbert supposed the poet had not then seen Ramsay's song.

James Findlay, an Officer of Excise in Tarbolton, who afterwards married one of the "belles of Mauchline," was appointed, in March 1788, to train Burns for the duties of an exciseman. It is by no means improbable that this same Mr Findlay, or a relative of his, was the hero of the foregoing song.]

REMORSE—A FRAGMENT.

(Currie, 1800.)

Of all the numerous ills that hurt our peace—
That press the soul, or wring the mind with anguish,
Beyond comparison the worst are those
By our own folly, or our guilt brought on:[1]
In ev'ry other circumstance, the mind
Has this to say, 'it was no deed of mine:'
But, when to all the evil of misfortune
This sting is added, 'blame thy foolish self!'
Or worser far, the pangs of keen remorse,
The torturing, gnawing consciousness of guilt—
Of guilt, perhaps, where we've involvèd others,
The young, the innocent, who fondly lov'd us;
Nay more, that very love their cause of ruin!
O burning hell! in all thy store of torments
There's not a keener lash!
Lives there a man so firm, who, while his heart
Feels all the bitter horrors of his crime,
Can reason down its agonizing throbs;
And, after proper purpose of amendment,
Can firmly force his jarring thoughts to peace?
O happy, happy, enviable man!
O glorious magnanimity of soul!

[These lines (reminding one of the "Fragment of a Tragedy," at p. 11), are recorded, under date September 1783, in the poet's first Com-

mon-place Book. It is most probable that the poem is set down at its proper date, prompted by keen self-reproaches produced through the effects of immoral indulgence. In his observations which introduce the piece, he seems to take credit to himself for bearing up against his wretchedness with manly firmness, because tempered with a penitential sense of his own misconduct. This spirit he terms "a glorious effort of self-command."

[1] Line fourth of this piece shews the only variation in early manuscripts. In the Common-place Book it appears as in our text. Currie gives it thus :

That to our folly or our guilt we owe :]

EPITAPH ON JAMES GRIEVE, LAIRD OF BOGHEAD, TARBOLTON.

(ORIG. COMMON-PLACE BOOK, 1872.)

HERE lies Boghead amang the dead,
In hopes to get salvation ;
But if such as he, in Heav'n may be,
Then welcome—hail ! damnation.

[This is the earliest sample of an extensive crop of like facetiae which the author, to the close of his life, was fond of producing. It is not very complimentary to the poor laird who provoked it ; yet, by adopting a very slight variation, the poet, in his Kilmarnock volume, converted this quatrain into a rich compliment to his friend, Gavin Hamilton, thus ;—

"The poor man weeps—here Gavin sleeps,
Whom canting wretches blamed ;
But with such as he, where'er he be,
May I be saved or damned !"

Boghead lies upwards of a mile due west from Lochlie, and near Adamhill. This epitaph does not accord very well with a gossiping anecdote given by Dr Waddell conveying the allegation of frequent friendly visits paid by Burns to Boghead during this early period.]

EPITAPH ON WM. HOOD, SENR., IN TARBOLTON.

(KILMARNOCK ED., 1786.)

HERE Souter Hood in death does sleep;
To hell if he's gane thither,
Satan, gie him thy gear to keep;
He'll haud it weel thegether.

[The poet printed this with the title "ON A CELEBRATED RULING ELDER." Every annotator hitherto has held it to apply to one of the elders of Mauchline kirk who aided in the persecution of Gavin Hamilton. It now appears, however, that one of the Tarbolton elders had, at a much earlier period, also provoked the poet's hostility—not certainly by his hypocrisy, but by his extreme penuriousness. The epitaph is recorded in the Common-place Book, along with the following, under date April 1784.]

EPITAPH ON MY OWN FRIEND AND MY FATHER'S FRIEND, WM. MUIR IN TARBOLTON MILL.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

AN honest man here lies at rest,
As e'er God with his image blest;
The friend of man, the friend of truth,
The friend of age, and guide of youth:
Few hearts like his—with virtue warm'd,
Few heads with knowledge so informed:
If there's another world, he lives in bliss;
If there is none, he made the best of this.

[We take the title of this from the original Common-place Book. Currie's heading is simply "Epitaph on a Friend." This has always been regarded as one of the finest of the poet's numerous compliments, paid in a posthumous form, to hale and hearty friends. The subject of it was the tenant of "Willie's Mill" of Death and Dr Hornbook, and a life-long friend of Burns and his relations. He died in 1793.

The opening line reads thus in the early MS.—

Here lies a cheerful, honest breast.]

EPITAPH ON MY EVER HONOURED FATHER.

(KILMARNOCK ED., 1786.)

O YE whose cheek the tear of pity stains,
Draw near with pious rev'rence, and attend!
Here lie the loving husband's dear remains,
The tender father, and the gen'rous friend;
The pitying heart that felt for human woe,
The dauntless heart that fear'd no human pride;
The friend of man—to vice alone a foe;
For "ev'n his failings lean'd to virtue's side."

[It is not likely (although not impossible) that this well-known Epitaph, like the preceding, was composed during the lifetime of the subject of it. We find it recorded on the same page, and under the same date (April 1784) as that to William Muir, in the original Common-place Book. Instead of the opening line, as in the text, he has there written—

"O ye who sympathize with virtue's pains;"

and apparently not satisfied with that, he suggests, at foot of the page—

"O ye whose hearts deceasèd merit pains."

The improvement effected in that line, as afterwards published, is very striking. The death of William Burnes happened at Lochlie, on 13th February 1784. These lines of the son are engraved on the father's headstone in Alloway kirkyard; and the reader, in musing over it, is apt to revert to the memorable words of John Murdoch:—"O for a world of men of such dispositions! I have often wished, for the good of mankind, that it were as customary to honour and perpetuate the memory of those who excel in moral rectitude, as it is to extol what are called heroic actions. Then would the mausoleum of the friend of my youth overtop and surpass most of those we see in Westminster Abbey!"]

BALLAD ON THE AMERICAN WAR.

Tune.—"Killicrankie."

(Edinburgh Ed,, 1787.)

When Guildford good our pilot stood,
An' did our hellim[a] thraw, man;
Ae night, at tea, began a plea,
Within America, man:
Then up they gat the maskin-pat,
And in the sea did jaw,[b] man;
An' did nae less, in full congress,
Than quite refuse our law, man.

Then thro' the lakes Montgomery* takes,
I wat he was na slaw, man;
Down Lowrie's Burn† he took a turn,
And Carleton did ca', man:
But yet, whatreck, he, at Quebec,
Montgomery-like‡ did fa', man,
Wi' sword in hand, before his band,
Amang his en'mies a', man.

Poor Tammy Gage within a cage
Was kept at Boston-ha',‖ man;

---

[a] helm. [b] toss.

* General Richard Montgomery invaded Canada, autumn 1775, and took Montreal,—the British commander, Sir Guy Carleton, retiring before him. In an attack on Quebec he was less fortunate, being killed by a storm of grape-shot in leading on his men at Cape Diamond.

† Lowrie's Burn, a pseudonym for the St Lawrence.

‡ A passing compliment to the Montgomeries of Coilsfield, the patrons of the poet.

‖ General Gage, governor of Massachusetts, was cooped up in Boston by General Washington during the latter part of 1775 and early part of 1776. In consequence of his inefficiency, he was replaced in October of that year by General Howe.

Till Willie Howe took o'er the knowe
For Philadelphia,* man;
Wi' sword an' gun he thought a sin
Guid christian bluid to draw, man;
But at New-York, wi' knife an' fork,
Sir-Loin he hackèd sma',† man.

Burgoyne gaed up, like spur an' whip,
Till Fraser brave did fa', man;
Then lost his way, ae misty day,
In Saratoga shaw,[c] man.‡
Cornwallis fought as lang's he dought,
An' did the buckskins claw,§ man;
But Clinton's glaive frae rust to save,
He hung it to the wa', man.

Then Montague, an' Guilford too,
Began to fear a fa', man;
And Sackville dour, wha stood the stoure,[d]
The German chief to thraw,[e] man:
For Paddy Burke, like ony Turk,
Nae mercy had at a', man;
An' Charlie Fox threw by the box,
An' lows'd his tinkler jaw, man.

---

[c] wood. [d] commotion. [e] thwart.

---

* General Howe removed his army from New York to Philadelphia in the summer of 1777.

† Alluding to a *razzia* made by orders of Howe at Peekskill, March 1777, when a large quantity of cattle belonging to the Americans was destroyed.

‡ General Burgoyne surrendered his army to General Gates, at Saratoga, on the Hudson, October 1776.

§ Alluding to the active operations of Lord Cornwallis in Virginia, in 1780, all of which ended, however, in his surrender of his army at Yorktown, October 1781, while vainly hoping for reinforcements from General Clinton at New York.

Then Rockingham took up the game ;
  Till death did on him ca', man ;
When Shelburne meek held up his cheek,
  Conform to gospel law, man :
Saint Stephen's boys, wi' jarring noise,
  They did his measures thraw, man ;
For North an' Fox united stocks,
  An' bore him to the wa,' man.*

Then clubs an' hearts were Charlie's cartes,
  He swept the stakes awa', man,
Till the diamond's ace, of Indian race,
  Led him a sair *faux pas*, man :†
The Saxon lads, wi' loud placads,[f]
  On Chatham's boy did ca', man ;
An' Scotland drew her pipe an' blew,
  "Up, Willie, waur[g] them a', man !"

Behind the throne then Granville's gone,
  A secret word or twa, man ;
While slee Dundas arous'd the class
  Be-north the Roman wa', man :
An' Chatham's wraith, in heav'nly graith,
  (Inspirèd bardies saw, man),
Wi' kindling eyes, cry'd, "Willie, rise !
  Would I hae fear'd them a', man ?"

---

[f] cheers. [g] vanquish.

* Lord North's administration was succeeded by that of the Marquis of Rockingham, March 1782. At the death of the latter in the succeeding July, Lord Shelburne became prime minister, and Mr Fox resigned his secretaryship. Under his lordship, peace was restored, January 1783. By the union of Lord North and Mr Fox, Lord Shelburne was soon after forced to resign in favour of his rivals, the heads of the celebrated coalition.

† Fox's famous India Bill, by which his ministry was brought to destruction, December 1783.

But, word an' blow, North, Fox, and Co.
Gowff'd[h] Willie like a ba', man;
Till Suthron raise, an coost their claise
Behind him in a raw, man:
An' Caledon threw by the drone,
An' did her whittle[i] draw, man;
An' swoor fu' rude, thro' dirt an' bluid,
To mak it guid in law, man.*

[With the exception of a very few expressions in the foregoing piece, it does not seem to have attracted popular attention. It was most likely a production of the spring of 1784, although not published in the author's first edition. He applied to the Earl of Glencairn and to Mr Erskine, Dean of Faculty, for their opinion as to the policy of including it in his Edinburgh volume, and they seem to have approved of it. Dr Blair, very characteristically remarked on reading the ballad that "Burns' politics smell of the smithy." This may be true, but the politics of the smithy regarding these matters did ultimately prevail. The explanatory foot-notes we adopt from Chambers.]

REPLY TO AN ANNOUNCEMENT BY J. RANKINE,

THAT A GIRL IN HIS NEIGHBOURHOOD WAS WITH CHILD TO THE POET.

(STEWART, 1801.)

I AM a keeper of the law
In some sma' points, altho' not a';
Some people tell me gin I fa',
Ae way or ither,
The breaking of ae point, tho' sma',
Breaks a' thegither.[a]

---

[h] struck. [i] knife. [a] James ii. 10.

* In the new parliament called by Mr Pitt, after his accession to office in the spring of 1784, amidst the many new members brought in for his support, and that of the king's prerogative, there was an exceeding proportion from Scotland.

I hae been in for't ance or twice,
And winna say o'er far for thrice;
Yet never met wi' that surprise
That broke my rest;
But now a rumour's like to rise—
A whaup's[b] 'i the nest!

[The girl Elizabeth Paton, referred to in Rankine's announcement, had been a servant at Lochlie about the period of the Poet's father's death in Feb. 1784. Thereafter, when the Burnes family removed to Mossgiel, the girl went to her own home at Largieside in Rankine's neighbourhood. In the natural course of events, the poet had soon occasion to write his famous "Epistle" to the same correspondent, on the subject of the preceding verses. That production accordingly now follows as a proper sequel.]

15c.

EPISTLE TO JOHN RANKINE,

ENCLOSING SOME POEMS.

(Kilmarnock Ed., 1786.)

O ROUGH, rude, ready-witted Rankine,
The wale[a] o' cocks for fun an' drinking!
There's mony godly folks are thinking,
Your dreams* and tricks
Will send you Korah-like a-sinkin,
Straught to auld Nick's.

Bible
4 Nos. 16

Ye hae sae mony cracks an' cants,
And in your wicked, drucken rants,
Ye mak a devil o' the saunts,
An' fill them fou;
And then their failings, flaws, an' wants,
Are a' seen thro'.

---

[b] Curlew, a bird that will scream. [a] choice.

---

* A certain humorous dream of his was then making a noise in the country-side.—*R. B.*

Hypocrisy, in mercy spare it!
That holy robe, O dinna tear it!
Spare't for their sakes, wha aften wear it—
The lads in black;
But your curst wit, when it comes near it,
Rives't[b] aff their back.

Think, wicked Sinner, wha ye're skaithing[c]:
It's just the 'Blue-gown' badge an' claithing
O' saunts; tak that, ye lea'e them naething
To ken them by,
Frae ony unregenerate heathen,
Like you or I.

I've sent you here some rhymin ware,
A' that I bargain'd for, an' mair;
Sae, when ye hae an hour to spare,
I will expect,
Yon sang* ye'll sen't, wi' cannie[d] care,
And no neglect.

Tho' faith, sma' heart hae I to sing!
My muse dow[e] scarcely spread her wing;
I've play'd mysel a bonie spring,
An' danc'd my fill!
I'd better gaen an' sair't[f] the king,
At Bunker's Hill.

'Twas ae night lately, in my fun,
I gaed a rovin wi' the gun,

---

[b] tears it. [c] damaging. [d] considerate. [e] can. [f] served.

---

* A song he had promised the author.—*R. B.*

An' brought a paitrick to the grun'—
A bonie hen ;
And, as the twilight was begun,
Thought nane wad ken.

The poor, wee thing was little hurt ;
I straiket it a wee for sport,
Ne'er thinkin they wad fash [g] me for't ;
But, Deil-ma-care !
Somebody tells the poacher-court, [h]
The hale affair.

Some auld, us'd hands had taen a note,
That sic a hen had got a shot ;
I was suspected for the plot ;
I scorn'd to lie ;
So gat the whissle o' my groat,
An' pay't the fee.

But, by my gun, o' guns the wale, [i]
An' by my pouther an' my hail,
An' by my hen, an' by her tail,
I vow an' swear !
The game shall pay, owre moor an' dale,
For this, niest year.

As soon's the clockin-time is by,
An' the wee pouts begun to cry,
L—d, I'se hae sportin by an' by,
For my gowd guinea ;
Tho' I should herd the buckskin kye
For't, in Virginia !

---

[g] bother. [h] kirk-session. [i] choice.

Trowth, they had muckle for to blame!
'Twas neither broken wing nor limb,
But twa-three draps about the wame,
Scarce thro' the feathers;
An' baith a "yellow George"[j] to claim
An' thole their blethers![k]

It pits me ay as mad's a hare;
So I can rhyme nor write nae mair;
But pennyworths again is fair,
When time's expedient:
Meanwhile I am, respected Sir,
Your most obedient.

[It would be interesting indeed to know what were the "poems" which the bard transmitted to Rankine along with this epistle, and even to learn what particular song he had craved from his jolly correspondent. Adamhill is in Craigie parish, although lying within two miles west of Lochlie, which was a much inferior farm. The special trick referred to in the second stanza was that of filling a sanctimonious professor miserably drunk, by entertaining him to a jorum of toddy at the farmhouse. The hot-water kettle had, by pre-arrangement, been primed with proof-whisky, so that the more water Rankine's guest added to his toddy for the purpose of diluting it, the more potent the liquor became.

Less reprehensible instances of his waggery were his "humorous dreams," which the ready-witted farmer of Adamhill had conveniently at hand to relate whenever he desired to help the progress of his argument, or to administer a rebuke. *Daft Rab Hamilton's* dreams were only poor imitations of those originally set forth by the poet's witty neighbour of Adamhill.]

---

[j] a guinea. [k] stand their abuse.

15 d

A POET'S WELCOME TO HIS LOVE-BEGOTTEN DAUGHTER,

THE FIRST INSTANCE THAT ENTITLED HIM TO THE VENERABLE APPELLATION OF FATHER.

(STEWART, 1799, COMPARED WITH GLENRIDDELL MSS., 1874.)

THOU 'S welcome, wean; mishanter[a] fa' me,
If thoughts[1] o' thee, or yet thy mamie,
Shall ever daunton[b] me or awe me,
My bonie[2] lady,
Or if I blush when thou shalt ca' me
Tyta or daddie.

Tho' now[3] they ca' me fornicator,
An' tease my name in kintry clatter,
The mair they talk, I'm kent the better,
E'en let them clash;
An auld wife's tongue 's a feckless[c] matter
To gie ane fash.

Welcome! my bonie, sweet, wee dochter,
Tho' ye come here a wee unsought for,
And tho' your comin' I hae fought for,[4]
Baith kirk and queir;[5]
Yet, by my faith, ye're[6] no unwrought for,
That I shall swear!

Wee image o' my bonie Betty,
As fatherly I[7] kiss and daut[d] thee,
As dear, and near my heart I set thee,
Wi' as gude will
As a' the priests had seen me get thee
That 's out o' h—ll.

---

[a] mishap. [b] discourage. [c] powerless. [d] fondle.

Sweet fruit o' mony a merry dint,
My funny toil is now a' tint,
Sin' thou cam to the warl' asklent,[e]
Which fools may scoff at;
In my last plack[f] thy part's be in 't
The better ha'f o't.

Tho' I should be the waur bestead,
Thou 's be as braw and bienly[g] clad,[8]
And thy young years as nicely bred
Wi' education,
As ony brat[9] o' wedlock's bed,
In a' thy station.

Lord grant[10] that thou may ay inherit
Thy mither's person, grace, an' merit,[11]
An' thy poor, worthless daddy's spirit,
Without his failins,
'Twill please me mair to see thee heir it,[12]
Than stocket mailens.[h]

For[13] if thou be what I wad hae thee,
And tak the counsel I shall gie thee,
I'll never rue my trouble wi' thee—
The cost nor shame o't,
But be a loving father to thee,
And brag the name o't.[14]

[The heading to the above poem is that in the Glenriddell volume preserved in Liverpool; but the copy entered there in Burns' autograph differs considerably from that first given to the world by Stewart. The verses are differently arranged, and the poem contains two hitherto unpublished stanzas, besides an entire remodelling of the verse which is last in the Glenriddell copy, and the fifth in Stewart. By some inadvertency, as we suppose, Burns, in transcribing the poem, had omitted

---

[e] sinisterly. [f] the smallest coin. [g] warmly. [h] farms.

Stewart's closing verse (the seventh in our text), which is so fine that it cannot be dispensed with. Through the kindness of Dr Carruthers, of Inverness, we have been supplied with a copy of this poem which Burns presented to the aged Wm. Tytler, Esq. of Woodhouselee. It corresponds almost entirely with the Glenriddell version, and contains the stanza wanting there. That and other Burns' MSS., to be hereafter noticed, are in the possession of Mr Tytler's great-grandson, Colonel Fraser-Tytler of Aldourie.

The child—born in Nov. 1784—was tenderly reared and educated at Mossgiel under the care of the poet's mother and sisters. When "Betty Burns" arrived at the age of twenty-one years, she received £200 as a marriage-portion out of a fund that had been subscribed for the widow and children of the bard. She bore a striking resemblance to her father, and became the wife of Mr John Bishop, overseer at Polkemmet, and died in December 1816, at the age of thirty-two. We have heard nothing of her offspring or her descendants.

The third and sixth stanzas are those that were brought to light in 1874 from the Glenriddell MSS. The variations in the Tytler copy and in Stewart are as follow:—

[1] ought. [2] Sweet wee. [3] What tho'. [4] bought for.
[5] And that right dear. [6] 'Twas. [7] I, fatherly, will.
[8] as elegantly clad. [9] gett. [10] Gude grant.
[11] mother's looks and graceful merit.
[12] hear and see it. [13] And if thou be.
[14] A lovin father I'll be to thee,
If thou be spared;
Thro' a' thy childish years I'll e'e thee,
And think't weel-wared.

The public is now in possession of the complete poem, with the author's last touches.]

SONG—O LEAVE NOVELS.

(CURRIE, 1801.)

O LEAVE novels, ye Mauchline belles,
Ye're safer at your spinning-wheel;
Such witching books are baited hooks
For rakish rooks like Rob Mossgiel;
Your fine Tom Jones and Grandisons,
They make your youthful fancies reel;
They heat your brains, and fire your veins,
And then you're prey for Rob Mossgiel.

Beware a tongue that's smoothly hung,
A heart that warmly seems to feel;
That feeling heart but acts a part—
'Tis rakish art in Rob Mossgiel.
The frank address, the soft caress,
Are worse than poisoned darts of steel;
The frank address, and politesse,
Are all finesse in Rob Mossgiel.

[This song contains excellent advice to the young women of Mauchline. It would have been well for at least one of those "belles" had she acted on the poet's candid warning; but, according to the philosophy of a reverend biographer of Burns whose observations are commended by Lockhart—"To warn the young and unsuspecting of their danger, is only to stimulate their curiosity." The warning, in that case, were better withheld.]

FRAGMENT—THE MAUCHLINE LADY.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

WHEN first I came to Stewart Kyle,
My mind it was na steady;
Where'er I gaed, where'er I rade,
A mistress still I had ay:

But when I came roun' by Mauchline toun,
Not dreadin anybody,
My heart was caught, before I thought,
And by a Mauchline lady.

[If the *Epistle to Davie* was composed in January 1785, then it follows that the poet's first rencontre with Jean Armour was in the summer of 1784. The present fragment, in that case, must apply to her. It is a free parody of the old song, "I had a horse, and I had nae mair," to which tune the author directs it to be set.

The reader ought to be informed that "Stewart Kyle," is that part of the central district of Ayrshire which lies between the rivers Irvine and Ayr. The poet was originally of "King Kyle,"—the district between the Ayr and the Doon. He shifted to Stewart Kyle on leaving Mount Oliphant for Lochlie, in 1777.]

FRAGMENT—MY GIRL SHE'S AIRY.

Tune.—"Black Jock."

(Orig. Common-place Book, 1872.)

20 a

My girl she's airy, she's buxom and gay;
Her breath is as sweet as the blossoms in May;
A touch of her lips it ravishes quite:
She's always good natur'd, good humor'd, and free;
She dances, she glances, she smiles upon me;
I never am happy when out of her sight.

20 b.

Her slender neck, her handsome waist,
Her hair well curled, her stays well lac'd,
Her taper white leg with . . . .
For her . . . . . .
And O for the joys of a long winter night.

[The above fragment of song the poet records in his Common-place Book, under date September 1784. The editor of the printed copy of that curious MS. has noted that in the original there is some "defect," where the blanks are filled up with asterisks. Had the fragment been recorded a year later, we might safely assume that Jean Armour was the "airy girl" here sketched out.]

THE BELLES OF MAUCHLINE.

(Currie, 1800.)

21

In Mauchline there dwells six proper young belles,
The pride of the place and its neighbourhood a';
Their carriage and dress, a stranger would guess,
In London or Paris, they'd gotten it a.'

Miss Miller[1] is fine, Miss Markland's[2] divine,
Miss Smith[3] she has wit, and Miss Betty[4] is braw:
There's beauty and fortune to get wi' Miss Morton,[5]
But Armour's[6] the jewel for me o' them a'.

[For the sake of the interest involved in whatever interested Burns, the after-history of the "six proper young belles," catalogued by him in this little piece, has been devoutly traced and recorded. Miss Helen Miller (1) married Burns' friend, Dr Mackenzie. The "divine" Miss Markland (2) was married to Mr James Findlay, an officer of excise, first at Tarbolton, afterwards at Greenock. The witty Miss Jean Smith (3) bestowed herself upon Mr James Candlish, who, like Findlay, was a friend of Burns. The "braw" Miss Betty Miller (4) became Mrs Templeton; she was sister of No. 1, and died early in life. Miss Morton (5) gave her "beauty and fortune" to Mr Paterson, a merchant in Mauchline. Of Armour's history, Immortality has taken charge. The last survivor (3) died in January 1854; she was mother of the Rev. Dr Candlish of Edinburgh, who was laid beside his parents in Old Calton, at Edinburgh, in October 1873.]

EPITAPH ON A NOISY POLEMIC.

(KILMARNOCK ED., 1786.)

BELOW thir stanes lie Jamie's banes;
O Death, it's my opinion,
Thou ne'er took such a bleth'rin b-tch
Into thy dark dominion!

[The subject of this not very witty versicle, was James Humphrey, a jobbing mason, well-known in Mauchline and Tarbolton for his tendency to talk on matters of church doctrine. He used to hint that the poet had satirized him in revenge for being beaten by Humphrey in an argument. He died in 1844 at the advanced age of 86, an inmate of Faile poor's-house; and many an alms-offering he earned in consequence of Burns' epitaph."]

EPITAPH ON A HENPECKED SQUIRE.

(KILMARNOCK ED., 1786.)

As father Adam first was fool'd,
(A case that's still too common,)
Here lies a man a woman ruled
The devil ruled the woman.

EPIGRAM ON THE SAID OCCASION.

O DEATH, had'st thou but spar'd his life,
Whom we this day lament!
We freely wad exchanged the wife,
And a' been weel content.
Ev'n as he is, cauld in his graff,
The swap we yet will do't;
Tak thou the carlin's carcase aff,
Thou'se get the saul o' boot.

ANOTHER.

ONE Queen Artemisa, as old stories tell,
When deprived of her husband she lovèd so well,
In respect for the love and affection he show'd her,
She reduc'd him to dust and she drank up the powder.
But Queen Netherplace, of a diff'rent complexion,
When called on to order the fun'ral direction,
Would have eat her dead lord, on a slender pretence,
Not to show her respect, but—to save the expence!

[The three foregoing epigrams were directed against Mr Campbell of Netherplace and his wife, whose house and grounds the poet daily passed on his way between Mossgiel and Mauchline. After publication in his first edition they were withdrawn.]

ON TAM THE CHAPMAN.

(ALDINE ED., 1839.)

As Tam the chapman on a day,
Wi' Death forgather'd by the way,
Weel pleas'd, he greets a wight so famous,
And Death was nae less pleas'd wi' Thomas,
Wha cheerfully lays down his pack,
And there blaws up a hearty crack:
His social, friendly, honest heart
Sae tickled Death, they could na part;
Sae, after viewing knives and garters,
Death taks him hame to gie him quarters.

[This was first brought to light by William Cobbett, who printed it in his Magazine. It had been communicated to him by the subject of the epitaph, by name Thomas Kennedy, then an aged person resident in London. He represented himself as having known the poet in very early life, in the neighbourhood of Ayr, where both were born and brought up. Kennedy afterwards became a travelling agent for a mercantile house in a country town near Mauchline, where he renewed acquaintance with Burns. These lines were composed on Kennedy's recovery from a severe illness.

This trifle may have suggested to Burns the idea afterwards worked out in "Death and Dr Hornbook."]

EPITAPH ON JOHN RANKINE.

(STEWART, 1801.)

AE day, as Death, that gruesome carl,
Was driving to the tither warl'
A mixtie-maxtie motley squad,
And mony a guilt-bespotted lad—
Black gowns of each denomination,
And thieves of every rank and station,

From him that wears the star and garter,
To him that wintles in a halter:
Ashamed himself to see the wretches,
He mutters, glowrin at the bitches,
"By G—d I'll not be seen behint them,
Nor 'mang the sp'ritual core present them,
Without, at least, ae honest man,
To grace this d——d infernal clan!"
By Adamhill a glance he threw,
"L—d God!" quoth he, "I have it now;
There's just the man I want, i' faith!"
And quickly stoppit Rankine's breath.

[This is another in the same vein as the preceding. Cromek has observed that the first idea of the lines seems to have been suggested by Falstaff's account of his ragged recruits:—"I'll not march through Coventry with them, that's flat!" The piece would be as much to Rankine's taste, as a similar compliment, some few years thereafter, was relished by Capt. Grose.]

LINES ON THE AUTHOR'S DEATH,

WRITTEN WITH THE SUPPOSED VIEW OF BEING HANDED TO RANKINE AFTER THE POET'S INTERMENT.

(Stewart, 1801.)

He who of Rankine sang, lies stiff and dead,
And a green grassy hillock hides his head;
Alas! alas! a devilish change indeed.

[These lines must be regarded as a counterpart to the poet's elegy on himself, composed shortly afterwards, beginning,—

"Now Robin lies in his last lair,
He'll gabble rhyme and sing nae mair."]

MAN WAS MADE TO MOURN.—A DIRGE.

(KILMARNOCK ED., 1786).

WHEN chill November's surly blast
Made fields and forests bare,
One ev'ning, as I wander'd forth
Along the banks of Ayr,
I spied a man, whose aged step
Seem'd weary, worn with care;
His face was furrow'd o'er with years,
And hoary was his hair.

"Young stranger, whither wand'rest thou?"
Began the rev'rend sage;
"Does thirst of wealth thy step constrain,
Or youthful pleasure's rage?
Or haply, prest with cares and woes,
Too soon thou hast began
To wander forth, with me to mourn
The miseries of man.

"The sun that overhangs yon moors,
Out-spreading far and wide,
Where hundreds labour to support
A haughty lordling's pride;—[1]
I've seen yon weary winter-sun
Twice forty times return;
And ev'ry time has added proofs,
That man was made to mourn.

"O man! while in thy early years,
How prodigal of time!
Mis-spending all thy precious hours—
Thy glorious, youthful prime!

Alternate follies take the sway;
Licentious passions burn;
Which tenfold force gives Nature's law,
That man was made to mourn.

"Look not alone on youthful prime,
Or manhood's active might;
Man then is useful to his kind,
Supported is his right:
But see him on the edge of life,[2]
With cares and sorrows[3] worn;
Then Age and Want—oh! ill-match'd pair—
Shew man was made to mourn.

"A few seem favourites of fate,
In pleasure's[4] lap carest;
Yet, think not all the rich and great
Are likewise truly blest:
But oh! what crowds in ev'ry land,
All wretched and forlorn,[5]
Thro' weary life this lesson learn,
That man was made to mourn.

"Many and sharp the num'rous ills
Inwoven[6] with our frame!
More pointed still we make ourselves,
Regret, remorse, and shame!
And man, whose heav'n-erected face
The smiles of love adorn,—
Man's inhumanity to man
Makes countless thousands mourn!

"See yonder poor, o'erlabour'd wight,
So abject, mean, and vile,

Who begs a brother of the earth
To give him leave to toil;
And see his lordly fellow-worm
The poor petition spurn,
Unmindful, tho' a weeping wife
And helpless offspring[7] mourn.

"If I'm design'd[8] yon lordling's slave—
By Nature's law[9] design'd—
Why was an independent wish
E'er planted in my mind?
If not, why am I subject to
His cruelty, or scorn?
Or why has man the will and pow'r
To make his fellow mourn?

"Yet, let not this too much, my son,
Disturb thy youthful breast:
This partial view of human-kind
Is surely not the last!
The poor, oppressèd, honest man[10]
Had never, sure,[11] been born,
Had there not been some recompense
To comfort those that mourn!

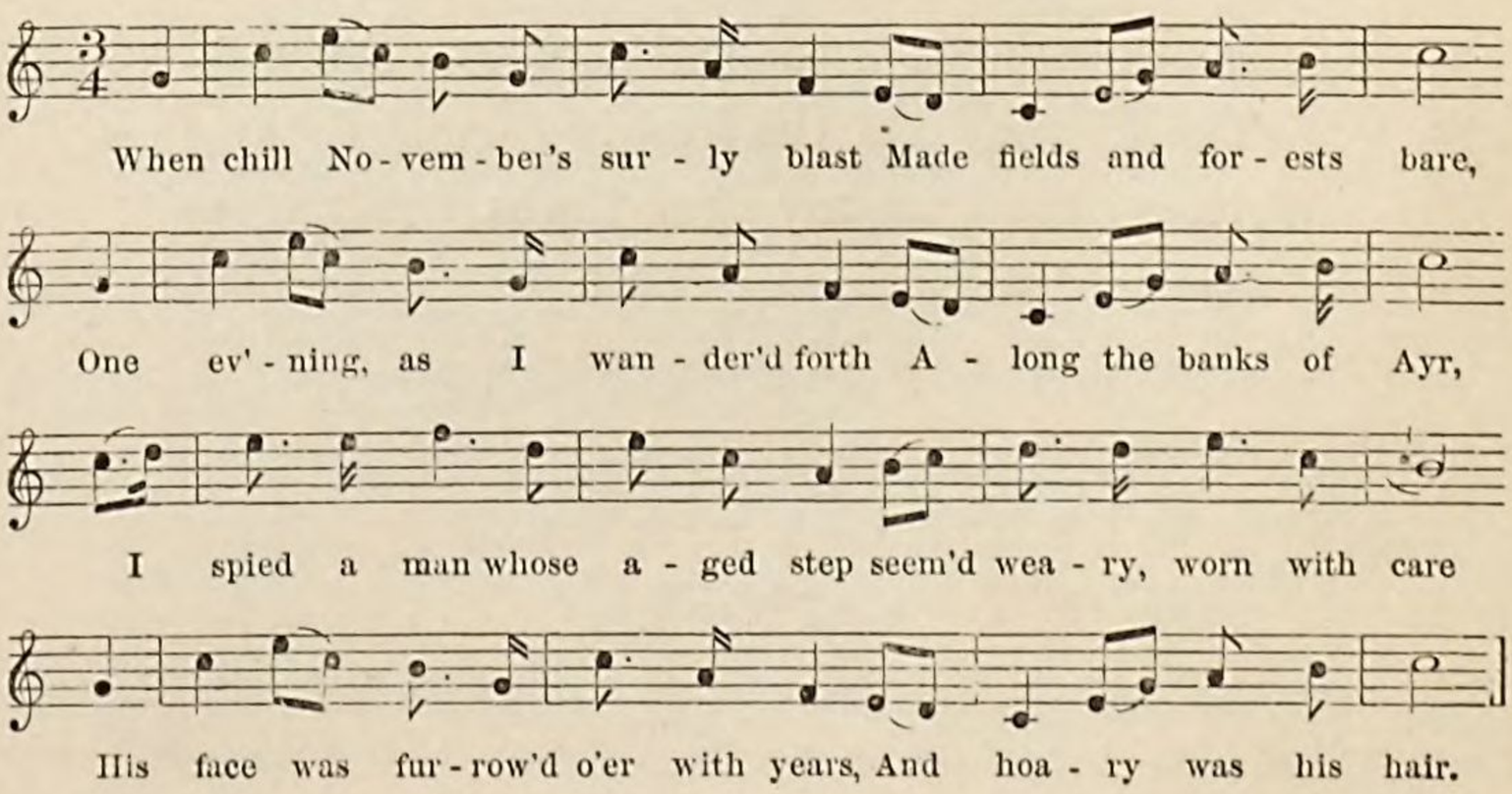
"O Death! the poor man's dearest friend,
The kindest and the best!
Welcome the hour my aged limbs
Are laid with thee at rest!
The great, the wealthy fear thy blow,
From pomp[12] and pleasure[13] torn;
But, oh! a blest relief for those
That weary-laden mourn!"

[This solemn composition has "chill November" in its introductory line, but the author's record of it in the Common-place

Book is dated "August." That document comes to a sudden close in October 1785, so that we are forced to regard this as a composition of November 1784. He there styles it "A Song," to the tune of "Peggy Bawn." The present generation knows somewhat of a modern song and tune called "Molly Bawn," but few alive ever heard of the air thus referred to, whose querulous notes lent their impulse to the mind of Burns, while he composed those stanzas. A lovely spot called "Haugh," a mile or more below Mauchline, near where the *Lugar* flows into the river Ayr, is pointed out as the locality indicated by the poet in his opening verse. In one of his letters to Mrs Dunlop, Burns writes:—"I had an old grand-uncle with whom my mother lived in her girlish years; the good old man was long blind ere he died, during which time, his highest enjoyment was to sit down and cry, while my mother would sing the simple old song, 'The Life and Age of Man.'" In Southey's *Doctor*, we find him thus referring to the present poem, and its connection with the above pathetic incident:—"It is certain that this old song was in Burns's mind when he composed to the same cadence those well-known stanzas of which the burthen is 'Man was made to mourn.' But the old blind man's tears were tears of piety, not of regret; while he thus listened and wept, his heart was not so much in the past as his hopes were in the future. Burns must have been conscious in his better hours (and he had many such) that he inherited the feeling—if not the sober piety—which is so touchingly exemplified in this family anecdote."

The wild cadences which gave effect to the antique words thus sung by the mother of Burns, could be none other than those of the melody of "Peggy Bawn." We are happy to say it is not lost; for the poet picked up the tune from his mother's singing, and, through Stephen Clarke, communicated it to Johnson who has preserved it in his *Museum*. That melody we here annex.

In slow time. *Air*—"Peggy Bawn."



The chief variations in the Common-place Book, commence at stanza third, which thus points to a locality with which he was very familiar in his early days :—

[1] Yon sun that hangs o'er Carrick moors,
That spread so far and wide,
Where hundreds labour to support
The lordly Cassilis' pride.

[2] "on the edge of days." [3] labours. [4] fortune's. [5] To wants and sorrows born. [6] Many the ills that Nature's hand Has woven. [7] children. [8] I am doom'd. [9] hand. [10] heart. [11] surely ne'er. [12] pomps. [13] pleasures.

THE TWA HERDS; OR, THE HOLY TULYIE.[a]

AN UNCO MOURNFU' TALE

(STEWART AND MEIKLE'S TRACTS, 1799.)

"Blockheads with reason, wicked wits abhor,
But fool with fool is barbarous civil war."—POPE.

O a' ye pious godly flocks,
Weel fed on pastures orthodox,
Wha now will keep you frae the fox,
Or worrying tykes ?[b]
Or wha will tent the waifs[c] an' crocks,[d]
About the dykes ?

The twa best herds in a' the wast,
That e'er ga'e gospel horn a blast
These five an' twenty[1] simmers past—
Oh, dool to tell !
Hae had a bitter black out-cast
Atween themsel.

O, Moodie, man, an' wordy Russell,
How could you raise so vile a bustle ;

---

[a] fight. [b] dogs. [c] stragglers. [d] old ewes.

Ye'll see how "new-light" herds* will whistle,
An' think it fine!
The L—'s cause ne'er gat sic a twistle,
Sin' I hae min'.

O, sirs! whae'er wad hae expeckit
Your duty ye wad sae negleckit,
Ye wha were ne'er[2] by lairds respeckit
To wear the plaid;
But by the brutes themselves eleckit,
To be their guide.

What flock wi' Moodie's flock could rank,
Sae hale and hearty every shank,
Nae poison'd soor Arminian stank
He let them taste;
Frae Calvin's well, ay clear[3] they drank,—
O, sic a feast!

The thummart,[e] willcat,[f] brock,[g] an' tod,[h]
Weel kend his voice thro' a' the wood,
He smell'd their ilka hole an' road,
Baith out and in;
An' weel he lik'd to shed their bluid,
An' sell their skin.

What herd like Russell tell'd his tale;
His voice was heard thro' muir and dale,†
He kenn'd the L—'s sheep, ilka tail,
Owre a' the height;
An' saw[4] gin they were sick or hale,
At the first sight.

---

[e] foumart, or pole-cat. [f] wild-cat. [g] badger. [h] fox.

---

* See foot-note, p. 125. † Russell's voice could be heard a mile off.

He fine a mangy sheep could scrub,
Or nobly fling[5] the gospel club,
And "new-light" herds could nicely drub,
Or pay their skin;
Could shake them o'er the burning dub,
Or heave them in.

Sic twa—O! do I live to see't,
Sic famous twa should disagree't,
And names, like "villain," "hypocrite,"
Ilk ither gi'en,
While "new-light" herds,[6] wi' laughin spite,
Say neither's lien!

A' ye wha tent the gospel fauld,
There's Duncan* deep, an' Peebles† shaul',
But[7] chiefly thou, apostle Auld,‡
We trust in thee,
That thou wilt work them, hot an' cauld,
Till they agree.[8]

Consider, sirs, how we're beset;
There's scarce a new herd that we get,
But comes frae 'mang that cursed set
I winna name;
I hope frae[9] heav'n to see them yet
In fiery flame.

Dalrymple§ has been lang our fae,
M'Gill‖ has wrought us meikle wae,

---

* Rev. Dr Duncan of Dundonald. † Rev. Wm. Peebles, Newton-on-Ayr.
‡ Rev. Wm. Auld of Mauchline. § Rev. Dr Dalrymple of Ayr.
‖ Rev. Dr M'Gill, Colleague of Dr Dalrymple.

An' that curs'd rascal ca'd M'Quhae,*
An' baith the Shaws,†
That aft hae made us black an' blae,
Wi' vengefu' paws.

Auld Wodrow‡ lang has hatch'd[10] mischief;
We thought ay[11] death wad bring relief,
But he has gotten, to our grief,
Ane to succeed him,§
A chield wha'll soundly buff our beef;
I meikle dread him.

And mony a ane that I could tell,
Wha fain would openly rebel,
Forby turn-coats amang oursel,
There's Smith‖ for ane;
I doubt he's but a grey nick quill,[i]
An' that ye'll fin'.

O! a' ye flocks o'er a' the hills,
By mosses, meadows, moors, an' fells,
Come, join your counsel and your skills
To cowe the lairds,
An' get the brutes the power themsels
To chuse their herds.

Then Orthodoxy yet may prance,
An' Learning in a woody[j] dance,

---

[i] soft, unfit for a pen. [j] gallows.

---

* Minister of St Quivox.

† Dr Andrew Shaw of Craigie, and Dr David Shaw of Coylton.

‡ Dr Peter Woodrow of Tarbolton.

§ Rev. John M'Math, a young assistant and successor to Woodrow.

‖ Rev. George Smith of Galston, here and in "The Holy Fair" claimed as friendly to the "new-light" party; but cried down in "The Kirk's Alarm."

An' that fell cur ca'd "common-sense,"*
That bites sae sair,
Be banish'd o'er the sea to France:
Let him bark there.[12]

Then Shaw's an' D'rymple's eloquence,
M'Gill's close nervous excellence,
M'Quhae's pathetic manly sense,
An' guid M'Math,
Wi' Smith, wha thro' the heart can glance,[13]
May a' pack aff.

[The author, in alluding to this poem in his autobiography, gives it no title such as that by which it is now distinguished. He calls it "a burlesque lamentation on a quarrel between two reverend Calvinists," and tells us that it was the first of his poetic offspring that saw the light. He does not mean the "light of print," but of circulation in manuscript. In our heading we give three titles, taken respectively from various printed copies; for we are not aware that any holograph copy exists except the one in the British Museum, which calls it "The Holy Tulyie."

In regard to its date, we suspect that Chambers, in placing it under April 1785, has no authority beyond a fancied connection between this poem and the epistle to Wm. Simson, of May 1785. The reader has been already prepared, by the author's outburst against clerical hypocrisy in the Epistle to Rankine, to find him writing shortly thereafter in the same vein. Lockhart tells us—as from personal knowledge—that Burns personally witnessed in open court the unseemly contention between the "twa herds,"—to wit, the Rev. John Russell of Kilmarnock, and the Rev. Alex. Moodie of Riccarton. If so, the ecclesiastical court records ought to fix the date precisely, if that be deemed a very important matter. Meanwhile, we assume that the affair happened prior to the close of 1784.

Taking the copy in Stewart's volume (1801) for our standard, we note the following variations :—

[1] fifty. [2] no. [3] Calvin's fountain-head. [4] tell'd. [5] swing.
[6] While enemies. [7] And chiefly gird thee, 'postle Auld.
[8] To gar them gree. [9] trust in. [10] wrought. [11] trusted.
[12] The poem ends here in the MS.
[13] In the Tract, 1799, this line reads,—"Wha through the heart can brawly glance," and thus the compliment to Smith is dispensed with, and turned in favour of M'Math.]

---

* "Common-sense" is claimed as the attribute of the "new-light" party.

23

EPISTLE TO DAVIE, A BROTHER POET.

JANUARY.

(Kilmarnock Ed., 1786.)

While winds frae off Ben-Lomond blaw,
An' bar the doors wi' drivin' snaw,
An' hing us owre the ingle,
I set me down to pass the time,
An' spin a verse or twa o' rhyme,
In hamely, westlin jingle:
While frosty winds blaw in the drift,
Ben to the chimla lug,[a]
I grudge a wee the great-folk's gift,
That live sae bien[b] an' snug:
I tent less, and want less[1]
Their roomy fire-side;
But hanker, and canker,
To see their cursed pride.

It's hardly in a body's pow'r,
To keep, at times, frae being sour,
To see how things are shar'd;
How best o' chiels are whyles in want,
While coofs[c2] on countless thousands rant,
And ken na how to ware't;[d]
But Davie, lad, ne'er fash[e] your head,
Tho' we hae little gear;[f]
We're fit to win our daily bread,
As lang's we're hale and fier:[g]

---

[a] inward's to the very fireside. [b] comfortable. [c] fools.
[d] spend it. [e] bother. [f] wealth. [g] active.

" Mair spier[h] na, nor fear na," *
Auld age ne'er mind a feg;[i]
The last o't, the warst o't,
Is only but to beg.

To lye in kilns and barns at e'en,
When banes are craz'd, and bluid is thin,
Is, doubtless, great distress!
Yet then content could make us blest;
Ev'n then, sometimes, we'd snatch a taste
Of truest happiness.
The honest heart that's free frae a'
Intended fraud or guile,
However Fortune kick the ba',
Has ay some cause to smile;
An' mind still, you'll find still,
A comfort this nae sma';
Nae mair then, we'll care then,
Nae farther we can fa'.

What tho', like commoners of air,
We wander out, we know not where,
But either house or hal',[j]
Yet nature's charms, the hills and woods,
The sweeping vales, an' foaming floods,
Are free alike to all.
In days when daisies deck the ground,
And blackbirds whistle clear,
With honest joy our hearts will bound,
To see the coming year:
On braes when we please then,
We'll sit an' sowth[k] a tune;

[h] enquire. [i] fig. [j] shelter. [k] hum.

* Ramsay.—*R. B.*

Syne rhyme till't, we'll time till't,
An' sing't when we hae done.

It's no in titles nor in rank;
It's no in wealth like Lon'on bank,
To purchase peace and rest:
It's no in makin muckle, mair;
It's no in books, it's no in lear,[1]
To make us truly blest:
If happiness hae not her seat
An' centre in the breast,
We may be wise, or rich, or great,
But never can be blest;
Nae treasures nor pleasures
Could make us happy lang;
The heart ay's the part ay
That makes us right or wrang.

Think ye, that sic as you and I,
Wha drudge an' drive thro' wet and dry,
Wi' never ceasing toil;
Think ye, are we less blest than they,
Wha scarcely tent[m] us in their way,
As hardly worth their while?
Alas! how oft in haughty mood,
God's creatures they oppress!
Or else, neglecting a' that's good,
They riot in excess!
Baith careless and fearless
Of either heaven or hell;
Esteeming, and deeming
It a'[3] an idle tale!

---

[1] learning. [m] notice.

Then let us cheerfu' acquiesce,
Nor make our scanty pleasures less,
By pining at our state:
And, even should misfortunes come,
I, here wha sit, hae[4] met wi' some—
An's thankfu' for them yet,
They gie the wit of age to youth;
They let us ken oursel;
They make[5] us see the naked truth—
The real guid and ill:
Tho' losses an' crosses
Be lessons right severe,
There's wit there, ye'll get there,
Ye'll find nae other where.

But tent me, Davie, ace o' hearts!
(To say aught less wad wrang the cartes,
And flatt'ry I detest)
This life has joys for you and I;
An' joys that riches ne'er could buy,
An' joys the very best.
There's a' the pleasures o' the heart,
The lover an' the frien';
Ye hae your Meg, your dearest part,
And I my darling Jean!
It warms me, it charms me,
To mention but her name:
It heats me, it beets me,
An' sets me a' on flame!

O all ye Pow'rs who rule above!
O Thou whose very self art love!
Thou know'st my words sincere!

The life-blood streaming thro' my heart,
Or my more dear immortal part,
Is not more fondly dear!
When heart-corroding care and grief[6]
Deprive my soul of rest,
Her dear idea brings relief,
And solace to my breast.
Thou Being, All-seeing,
O hear my fervent pray'r;
Still take her, and make her
Thy most peculiar care!

All hail; ye tender feelings dear!
The smile of love, the friendly tear,
The sympathetic glow!
Long since, this world's thorny ways
Had number'd out my weary days,
Had it not been for you!
Fate still has blest me with a friend,
In ev'ry care and ill;
And oft a more endearing band—
A tie more tender still.
It lightens, it brightens
The tenebrific scene,
To meet with, an' greet with
My Davie, or my Jean!

O, how that *Name* inspires my style!
The words come skelpin, rank an' file,
Amaist before I ken!
The ready measure rins as fine,
As Phœbus an' the famous Nine
Were glowrin owre my pen.

My spavet Pegasus will limp,
Till ance he's fairly het ;
And then he'll hilch,[n] and stilt, an' jimp,
And rin an unco fit :[o]
But least then the beast then
Should rue this hasty ride,
I'll light now, and dight[p] now
His sweaty, wizen'd[q] hide.

[The variations in a MS. of this poem, possessed by Robert Gibson, Esq., Glasgow, are interesting. The date is "January 1785," and it is headed "An Epistle to Davy, a Brother-Poet, Lover, Ploughman, and Fiddler."

[1] want less and tent less. [2] fools. [3] It's a'. [4] Yet here I sit hae.
[5] let. [6] In all my share o' care an' grief,
Which Fate has largely given,
My hope, my comfort, an' relief
Are thoughts of Her and Heaven.
Thou Being, &c.

The "Davie" of the poem was David Sillar, one year younger than Burns, and also the son of a small farmer near Tarbolton. He removed to Irvine before the poet published his first edition. Smitten with the spirit of emulation, he also printed a volume of rhyming ware, which appeared in 1789, and Burns, then at Ellisland, helped him to his utmost in procuring subscribers. "Davie" did not make a fortune by the sale of his book ; but he applied himself earnestly to business, first as a grocer, and thereafter as a schoolmaster. Eventually he became a councillor, and latterly a magistrate, of Irvine, and survived till 1830, much respected, and possessed of considerable means.

The poem exhibits Burns in the full blossom of attachment to his Jean. It was not the fate of Sillar to obtain the hand of his "Meg" referred to in the Epistle : she was *Margaret Orr*, a servant at Stair House.]*

---

[n] hobble. [o] run at an uncommon pace. [p] wipe down. [q] withered.

---

* For further observations regarding the date of this epistle, see note to song, "Tho' cruel fate should bid us part," p. 130, and also foot-note, p. 129.

Pope
15

HOLY WILLIE'S PRAYER.

"And send the godly in a pet to pray."—POPE.

(STEWART AND MEIKLE'S TRACTS, 1799.)

ARGUMENT.—Holy Willie was a rather oldish bachelor elder, in the parish of Mauchline, and much and justly famed for that polemical chattering, which ends in tippling orthodoxy, and for that spiritualized bawdry which refines to liquorish devotion. In a sessional process with a gentleman in Mauchline—a Mr Gavin Hamilton—*Holy Willie* and his priest, Father Auld, after full hearing in the presbytery of Ayr, came off but second best; owing partly to the oratorical powers of Mr Robert Aiken, Mr Hamilton's counsel; but chiefly to Mr Hamilton's being one of the most irreproachable and truly respectable characters in the county. On losing his process, the muse overheard him [Holy Willie] at his devotions, as follows:—

O THOU, who in the heavens does[1] dwell,
Who, as it pleases best Thysel,
Sends ane to heaven an' ten to hell,
A' for Thy glory,
And no for ony gude or ill
They've done afore[2] Thee!*

I bless and praise Thy matchless might,
When thousands Thou hast left in night,
That I am here afore[2] Thy sight,
For gifts an' grace
A burning and a shining light
To a' this place.

---

* It is equally amusing and instructive to note how differently the respective biographers of the poet have expressed their sentiments regarding this powerful production. The Rev. Hamilton Paul and the Rev. Hately Waddell, seem to invite the friends of religion to bless the memory of the poet who took such a judicious method of "leading the liberal mind to a rational view of the nature of prayer." Dr Waddell says that the poem "implies no irreverence whatever on the writer's part; but on the contrary, manifests his own profoundest detestation of, and contempt for, every variety of imposture in the name of religion." His brother divine regards the poem as "merely a metrical version of every prayer that is offered up by those who call themselves of the pure reformed church of

What was I, or my generation,
That I should get sic exaltation,
I wha deserve most[3] just damnation
For broken laws,
Five[4] thousand years ere[5] my creation,
Thro' Adam's cause.

When frae my mither's womb I fell,
Thou might hae plungèd me in hell,
To gnash my gums, to weep and wail,
In burnin lakes,[6]
Where damnèd devils roar and yell,
Chain'd to their stakes.[7]

Yet I am here a chosen sample,
To show Thy grace is great and ample;
I'm here a pillar o'[8] Thy temple,
Strong as a rock,
A guide, a buckler,[9] and example,
To a' thy flock.

O L—d, Thou kens what zeal I bear,
When drinkers drink, an' swearers swear,
An' singin' there, an' dancin' here,
Wi' great and sma';
For I am keepit by Thy fear
Free frae them a'.

Scotland." Motherwell, on the other hand, styles it "by far the most reprehensible of Burns' pieces, and one which should never have been written." Cunningham timidly shelters himself behind the words of Sir Walter Scott, by calling it a "too daring poem," and "a piece of satire more exquisitely severe than any which Burns ever afterwards wrote." Chambers describes it as "a satire nominally aimed at *Holy Willie*, but in reality a burlesque of the extreme doctrinal views of the party to which that hypocrite belonged." Many will agree with Sir Harris Nicolas in saying that "the reverend admirers of the poem appear to have compounded with their consciences for being pleased with a piece showing little veneration for religion itself, because it ridicules the mistaken zeal of an opposite sect."

BAYERISCHE STAATS-BIBLIOTHEK MUENCHEN

But yet, O L—d! confess I must,
At times I'm fash'd[a] wi' fleshly lust:
An' sometimes, too, in[10] warldly trust,
Vile self gets in;
But Thou remembers we are dust,
Defil'd wi'[11] sin.

O L—d! yestreen, Thou kens, wi' Meg—
Thy pardon I sincerely beg,
O! may 't ne'er be a livin plague
To my dishonour,
An' I'll ne'er lift a lawless leg
Again upon her.

Besides, I farther maun allow,
Wi' Leezie's lass, three times I trow—
But L—d, that Friday I was fou,
When I cam near her;
Or else, Thou kens, Thy servant true
Wad never steer her.[12]

Maybe Thou lets this fleshly thorn
Buffet[13] Thy servant e'en and morn,
Lest he owre proud and high[14] shou'd turn,
That[15] he's sae gifted:
If sae, Thy han' maun e'en be borne,
Until Thou lift it.

L—d, bless Thy chosen in this place,
For here Thou hast a chosen race:
But G—d confound their stubborn face,
An' blast their name,
Wha bring Thy elders[16] to disgrace
An' public shame.

---

[a] troubled.

L—d, mind Gaw'n Hamilton's deserts;
He drinks, an' swears, an' plays at carts,[b]
Yet has sae mony takin arts,
Wi' great[17] and sma',
Frae G—d's ain priest[18] the people's hearts
He steals awa.

An' when we chasten'd him therefor,
Thou kens how he bred sic a splore,[c]
An'[19] set the warld in a roar
O' laughing at us;—
Curse Thou his basket and his store,
Kail an' potatoes.

L—d, hear my earnest cry and pray'r,
Against that[20] Presbyt'ry o' Ayr;
Thy strong right hand, L—d, make it bare
Upo' their heads;
L—d visit them,[21] an' dinna spare,
For their misdeeds.

O L—d, my G—d! that glib-tongu'd Aiken,
My vera heart and flesh[22] are quakin,
To think how we stood sweatin, shakin,
An' p—'d wi' dread,
While he, wi' hingin lip an' snakin,[d]
Held up his head.

L—d, in Thy day o'[23] vengeance try him,
L—d, visit them[24] wha did employ him,
And pass not in Thy mercy by them,
Nor hear their pray'r,
But for Thy people's sake destroy them,
An' dinna spare.

---

[b] cards. [c] disturbance. [d] exulting and sneering.

But, L—d, remember me an' mine
Wi' mercies temporal an' divine,
That I for grace an' gear[25] may shine,
Excell'd by nane,
And a' The glory shall be thine,
Amen, Amen!

[The "Argument," or introduction, now for the first time printed at the head of this poem, is from the bard's own pen. It is prefixed to the copy inserted in the Glenriddell volume at Liverpool. This enables us with some certainty to decide that the early part of the year 1785 (instead of July of that year, according to Chambers) was the date of the composition. The "sessional process" referred to really commenced in August 1784, just before the annual celebration of the communion at Mauchline, when the name of Gavin Hamilton, friend and landlord of the poet, was included in a list of members who were threatened to be debarred from the communion table for "habitual neglect of church ordinances." Hamilton, believing that he himself was the party chiefly aimed at, addressed an angry letter to the kirk session, telling them that they had no just grounds of offence against him, and that they must be conscious of proceeding purely on "private pique and ill-nature." Hamilton finding the kirk session obstinate, and inclined to treat him still more offensively, appealed to the presbytery of Ayr for protection, and in January 1785, he obtained a decree of that court ordering the erasure of the session minutes complained of. It was at this stage—as we apprehend—that the muse of Burns "overheard *Holy Willie* at his devotions;" but that personage did not content himself with "prayers" merely, for Auld and his confederates refused to obey the presbyterial order, and made appeal to the Synod. The process there did not close till July 1785, when the affair was compromised by Hamilton's acceptance of a certificate from his kirk session granting him to be "free from all ground of church censure."

In the complete "Prayer" there are seventeen stanzas, the *sixth* of which is rarely found in the later manuscripts; perhaps because Burns felt it to be rather a weak verse, and excluded it in transcribing. It is not in Stewart and Meikle's Tracts, 1799, nor in Stewart's volume, 1801; but it appears in his second edition, 1802. It is amusing to notice how the various editors have dealt with the text. The Rev. Hamilton Paul gives it pure and uncastrated, excluding only the *sixth* verse, of the existence of which he might not be aware. Cunningham omits verses *sixth* and *eighth*, and corrupts the *fifteenth*. Motherwell gives all the seventeen verses, but his *fifteenth* stanza is the "Dumfries version," of which we shall presently speak. Chambers omits the *sixth*, *eighth*,

and *ninth* verses, besides repeating Cunningham's corruption of verse *fifteenth*. The Glenriddell MS. adopts what we have termed the "Dumfries version" of the *fifteenth* stanza. The poet's friends in that county stumbled at the word "snakin," which, in the text has a meaning the very opposite of the English word *sneaking*. To please them, he altered the structure and effect of the stanza, so that the word objected to has the ordinary meaning of the word "sneaking," but only pronounced as an Irishman might—"*snakin'*." The following is the altered stanza, and the reader may decide for himself whether it or the Ayrshire version is the better one :—

"O L—d, my G—d, that glib-tongued Aiken!
My very heart and flesh are quaking,
To think how I sat sweating, shaking,
And p—ss'd wi' dread,
While Auld, wi' hinging lip, gaed sneaking,
And hid his head!"

A very fine Dumfries MS. of this poem, possessed by Alex. Young, Esq., Glasgow, has been made use of to enrich our text with some beautiful variations. From Stewart's version and other MS., we note the following changes. Be it remarked, however, that the motto from Pope is found only in Dumfries copies. The same observation applies to the motto prefixed to the *Twa Herds*.

[1] O Thou that in the heavens does dwell. [2] before. [3] sic. [4] Sax.
[5] 'fore. [6] lake. [7] a stake. [8] in. [9] ruler. [10] wi'. [11] in.
[12] ne'er hae steer'd her. [13] Beset. [14] high and proud.
[15] 'Cause. [16] rulers. [17] grit. [18] priests. [19] As. [20] the.
[21] weigh it down. [22] saul. [23] the day of. [24] him.
[25] gear and grace.]

EPITAPH ON HOLY WILLIE.

(STEWART, 1801.)

HERE Holy Willie's sair worn clay
Taks up its last abode;
His saul has ta'en some other way,
I fear, the left-hand road.

Stop! there he is, as sure's a gun,
Poor, silly body, see him;
Nae wonder he's as black's the grun,
Observe wha's standing wi' him.

Your brunstane devilship, I see
Has got him there before ye;
But haud your nine-tail cat a wee,
Till ance you've heard my story.

Your pity I will not implore,
For pity ye have nane;
Justice, alas! has gi'en him o'er,
And mercy's day is gane.

But hear me, Sir, deil as ye are,
Look something to your credit;
A coof like him wad stain your name,
If it were kent ye did it.

[This "Epitaph" is a poor performance, compared with the main poem; and the author would seem to have been sensible of this when he refrained from transcribing it into the Glenriddell volume along with the "Prayer." It was not published till two years after the latter made its first appearance, and we are not aware that it now exists in the poet's autograph. The name of the hero of these biting satires was William Fisher, a leading elder in the parish church of Mauchline. Its kirk-session, in 1785, consisted of three active members—Rev. William Auld, Mr John Sillars, and "Holy Willie." In cases of discipline, the reverend incumbent, as moderator, first expressed his opinion, and foreshadowed judgment: William Fisher would obsequiously second the minister in the words, "I say wi' you, Mr Auld—what say you, Mr Sillars?" The latter might either agree or dissent, for it made no difference, he being a hopeless minority in a court like that. Such is the account of "Daddie Auld's" session given by Dr Waddell, on the authority of local reminiscences gleaned by him in the district.

Burns, in a poem produced in 1789, refers to his ancient foe, William Fisher, in these words:—

"Holy Will, holy Will, there was wit in your skull,
When ye pilfer'd the alms of the poor."

It appears that the sins of the hoary hypocrite rapidly found him out. The date of his death we have not ascertained, but his exit was quite in character; for he died in a ditch by the road-side, into which he had fallen on his way home from a debauch. Father Auld and he repose in Mauchline kirkyard, almost side by side, the inscription on the minister's tablet recording that he died on 12th December 1791, in his 81st year.]

DEATH AND DOCTOR HORNBOOK,

A TRUE STORY.

(EDINBURGH EDITIONS, 1787-1794.)

SOME books are lies frae end to end,
And some great lies were never penn'd:
Ev'n ministers they hae been kenn'd,
In holy rapture,
A rousing whid[a] at times to vend,[1]
And nail't wi' Scripture.

But this that I am gaun to tell,
Which lately on a night befel,
Is just as true's the Deil's in hell
Or Dublin city:
That e'er he nearer comes oursel
'S a muckle pity.

The clachan yill[b] had made me canty,
I was na fou, but just had plenty;
I stacher'd whyles,[c] but yet took tent ay
To free the ditches;
An' hillocks, stanes, an' bushes, kenn'd ay
Frae ghaists an' witches.

The rising moon began to glowre
The distant *Cumnock* hills out-owre:
To count her horns,* wi' a' my pow'r,
I set mysel;
But whether she had three or four,
I cou'd na tell.

---

[a] fib. [b] village ale. [c] staggered at times.

* Cumnock hills lie south-east from Tarbolton; and *hence*, it is argued by Dr Waddell, the moon could not be seen in *crescent* from the poet's standpoint. The learned critic has forgot the "clachan yill."

I was come round about the hill,
An' todlin down on *Willie's mill*,
Setting my staff wi' a' my skill,
To keep me sicker ;[d]
Tho' leeward whyles,[e] against my will,
I took a bicker.

I there wi' *Something* did[2] forgather,
That pat me in an eerie swither ;[f]
An' awfu' scythe, out-owre ae shouther,
Clear-dangling, hang ;
A three-tae'd leister[g] on the ither
Lay, large an' lang.

Its stature seem'd lang Scotch ells twa,
The queerest shape that e'er I saw,
For fient a wame[h] it had ava ;
And then its shanks,
They were as thin, as sharp an' sma'
As cheeks o' branks.[i]

'Guid-een,' quo' I ; 'Friend ! hae ye been mawin,
'When ither folk are busy sawin !'*
It seem'd to mak a kind o' stan,'
But naething spak ;
At length, says I, 'Friend ! whare ye gaun ?
'Will ye go back ?'

It spak right howe,[j]—'My name is *Death*,
'But be na' fley'd.'[k]—Quoth I, 'Guid faith,

---

[d] secure. [e] at times. [f] timid hesitation. [g] fish-spear.
[h] belly. [i] wooden bridle. [j] hollow. [k] afraid.

---

* This rencontre happened in seed-time, 1785.—*R. B.*

'Ye're may be come to stap my breath;
'But tent me, billie;
'I red[l] ye weel, tak care o' skaith,[m]
'See, there's a gully!'[n]

'Gudeman,' quo' he, 'put up your whittle,[o]
'I'm no design'd to try its mettle;
'But if I did, I wad be kittle[p]
'To be mislear'd;[q]
'I wad na mind it, no that spittle
'Out-owre my beard.'[r]

'Weel, weel!' says I, 'a bargain be't;
'Come, gies your hand, an' sae we're gree't;
'We'll ease our shanks an' tak a seat—
'Come, gies your news;
'This while ye hae been mony a gate,
'At mony a house.'*

'Ay, ay!' quo' he, an' shook his head,
'It's e'en a lang, lang time indeed
'Sin' I began to nick the thread,
'An' choke the breath:
'Folk maun do something for their bread,
'An' sae maun *Death*.

'Sax thousand years are near-hand fled
'Sin' I was to the butching bred,

---

[l] advise. [m] harm. [n] clasp-knife. [o] knife.
[p] itchingly apt. [q] unmannerly. [r] chin.

---

* An epidemical fever was then raging in that country.—*R. B.*

'An' mony a scheme in vain's been laid,
'To stap or scar me;
'Till ane *Hornbook*'s* ta'en up the trade,
'And faith! he'll waur me.

'Ye ken *Jock Hornbook* i' the Clachan[s]—
'Deil mak his king's-hood in a spleuchan![t]—
'He's grown sae weel acquaint wi' *Buchan* †
'And ither chaps,
'The weans haud out their fingers laughin,
'An' pouk[u] my hips.

'See, here's a scythe, an' there's a dart,
'They hae pierc'd mony a gallant heart;
'But Doctor *Hornbook* wi' his art
'An' cursed skill,
'Has made them baith no worth a f—t,
'D—n'd haet they'll kill!

''Twas but yestreen, nae farther gane,
'I threw a noble throw at ane;
'Wi' less, I'm sure, I've hundreds slain;
'But deil-ma-care,
'It just play'd dirl on the bane,
'But did nae mair.

'*Hornbook* was by, wi' ready art,
'An' had sae fortify'd the part,

---

[s] village. [t] purse or pouch. [u] pull.

* This gentleman, Dr Hornbook, is professionally a brother of the sovereign order of the ferula; but, by intuition and inspiration, is at once an apothecary, surgeon, and physician.—*R. B.*

† Buchan's Domestic Medicine.—*R. B.* Dr. Wm. Buchan died in 1805.

'That when I lookèd to my dart,
'It was sae blunt,
'Fient haet o't wad hae pierc'd the heart
'Of a kail-runt.[v]

'I drew my scythe in sic a fury,
'I near-hand cowpit[w] wi' my hurry,
'But yet the bauld *Apothecary*
'Withstood the shock;
'I might as weel hae try'd a quarry
'O' hard whin rock.

'Ev'n them he canna get attended,
'Altho' their face he ne'er had kend it,
'Just —— in a kail-blade, an' send it,
'As soon's he smells 't,
'Baith their disease, and what will mend it,
'At once he tells 't.

'And then a' doctor's saws an' whittles,
'Of a' dimensions, shapes, an' mettles,
'A' kinds o' boxes, mugs, an' bottles,
'He's sure to hae;
'Their Latin names as fast he rattles
'As A B C.

'Calces o' fossils, earths, and trees;
'True sal-marinum o' the seas;
'The farina of beans an' pease,
'He has't in plenty;
'Aqua-fontis, what you please,
'He can content ye.

---

[v] cabbage-stalk. [w] overbalanced.

'Forbye some new, uncommon weapons,
'Urinus spiritus of capons;
'Or mite-horn shavings, filings, scrapings,
Distill'd *per se*;
'Sal-alkali o' midge-tail-clippings,
'And mony mae.'

'Waes me for *Johnie Ged's* * *Hole* now,'
Quoth I, 'if that thae news be true!
'His braw calf-ward[x] whare gowans[y] grew,
'Sae white and bonie,
'Nae doubt they'll rive it wi' the plew;
'They'll ruin *Johnie!*'

The creature grain'd an eldritch[z] laugh,
And says, 'Ye needna yoke the pleugh,
'Kirkyards will soon be till'd eneugh,
'Tak ye nae fear:
'They'll a' be trench'd wi mony a sheugh,[a]
'In twa-three year.

'Whare I kill'd ane, a fair strae death,[b]
'By loss o' blood or want of breath,
'This night I'm free to tak my aith,
'That *Hornbook's* skill
'Has clad a score i' their last claith,
'By drap an' pill.

'An honest wabster to his trade,
'Whase wife's twa nieves were scarce weel-bred,

---

[x] grazing plot. [y] daisies. [z] ghastly. [a] furrow. [b] death-bed exit.

---

* The grave-digger.—*R. B.*

'Gat tippence-worth to mend her head,
When it was sair;
'The wife slade cannie to her bed,
'But ne'er spak mair.

'A country laird had ta'en the batts,
'Or some curmurring in his guts,
'His only son for *Hornbook* sets,
'An' pays him well:
'The lad, for twa guid gimmer-pets,[c]
'Was laird himsel.

'A bonie lass—ye kend her name—
'Some ill-brewn drink had hov'd her wame;
'She trusts hersel, to hide the shame,
'In *Hornbook's* care;
'*Horn* sent her aff to her lang hame,
'To hide it there.

'That's just a swatch[d] o' *Hornbook's* way;
'Thus goes he on from day to day,
'Thus does he poison, kill, an' slay,
'An's weel paid for't;
'Yet stops me o' my lawfu' prey,
'Wi' his d—n'd dirt:

'But, hark! I'll tell you of a plot,
'Tho' dinna ye be speakin o't;
'I'll nail the self-conceited sot,
'As dead's a herrin;
'Niest time we meet, I'll wad a groat,
'He gets his fairin!'

---

[c] young ewes. [d] sample.

But just as he began to tell,
The auld kirk-hammer strak the bell
Some wee short hour ayont the *twal,*
Which rais'd us baith:
I took the way that pleas'd mysel,
And sae did *Death.*

[The author himself has fixed the date of this poem, which, like Tam-o'-Shanter, was struck off almost complete at one heat; for Gilbert has told us that his brother repeated the stanzas to him on the day following the night of the *tiff* with Wilson at the mason lodge. John Wilson, parish schoolmaster at Tarbolton, had also a small grocery shop where he sold common drugs, and gave occasional medical advice in simple cases, and thus became a person of some importance in the village. According to Mr Lockhart he was not merely compelled, through the force and widely-spread popularity of this attractive satire, to close his shop, but to abandon his school-craft also, in consequence of his pupils, one by one, deserting him. "Hornbook" removed to Glasgow, and by dint of his talents and assiduity, at length obtained the respectable situation of session-clerk of Gorbals parish. He died January 13, 1839. Many a time in his latter days he has been heard, "over a bowl of punch, to bless the lucky hour when the dominie of Tarbolton provoked the castigation of Robert Burns."

In the author's earlier editions the word *did*[2] in verse sixth, ungrammatically reads "does;" and line fifth of the opening stanza reads thus:—

"Great lies and nonsense baith to vend."]

EPISTLE TO J. LAPRAIK,

AN OLD SCOTTISH BARD.—APRIL 1, 1785.

(Kilmarnock Ed., 1786.)

While briers an' woodbines budding green,
An' paitricks scraichin loud at e'en,
An' morning poussie whiddin[a] seen,
Inspire my muse,
This freedom, in an unknown frien',
I pray excuse.

---

[a] a hare in quick motion.

On Fasten-e'en[b] we had a rockin,[c]
To ca' the crack[d] and weave our stockin;
And there was muckle fun and jokin,
Ye need na doubt;
At length we had a hearty yokin,[e]
At 'sang about.'

There was ae sang, amang the rest,
Aboon them a' it pleas'd me best,
That some kind husband had addrest
To some sweet wife;
It thirl'd[f] the heart-strings thro'[1] the breast,
A' to the life.

I've scarce heard ought describ'd[2] sae weel,
What gen'rous, manly bosoms feel;[3]
Thought I, "can this be Pope, or Steele,
Or Beattie's wark?"
They tauld me 'twas an odd kind chiel
About Muirkirk.

It pat me[4] fidgin-fain[g] to hear't,
An' sae about him there[5] I spier't;[h]
Then a' that kent him round declar'd
He had *ingine*;[i]
That nane excell'd it, few cam near't,
It was sae fine:[6]

That, set him to a pint of ale,
An' either douce[j] or merry tale,

---

[b] the night before Lent. [c] gathering. [d] chat. [e] set-to. [f] thrilled.
[g] excitedly eager. [h] asked. [i] genius. [j] grave.

Or rhymes an' sangs he'd made himsel,
Or witty catches—
'Tween Inverness an' Teviotdale,
He had few matches.

Then up I gat, an' swoor an aith,
Tho' I should pawn my pleugh an' graith,[k]
Or die a cadger[l] pownie's death,
At some dyke-back,
A pint an' gill I'd gie them baith,
To hear your crack.[m]

But, first an' foremost, I should tell,
Amaist as soon as I could spell,
I to the crambo-jingle[n] fell ;[7]
Tho' rude an' rough—
Yet[8] crooning[o] to a body's sel,[9]
Does weel eneugh.

I am nae poet, in a sense ;
But just a rhymer like by chance.
An' hae to learning nae pretence ;
Yet, what the matter ?
Whene'er my muse does on me glance,
I jingle at her.

Your critic-folk may cock their nose,
And say, "how can you e'er propose,
You wha ken hardly verse frae[10] prose,
To mak a sang ?"
But, by your leave, my learned foes,
Ye're maybe wrang.

---

[k] harness. [l] hawker. [m] chat. [n] rhyming syllables. [o] humming.

What's a' your jargon o' your schools—
Your Latin names for horns an' stools?
If honest Nature made you fools,
What sairs[p] your grammars?
Ye'd better taen up spades and shools,
Or knappin-hammers.

A set o' dull, conceited hashes[11]
Confuse their brains in college-classes
They gang in stirks,[q] and come out asses,
Plain truth[12] to speak;
An' syne[13] they think to climb Parnassus
By dint o' Greek!

Gie me ae spark o' nature's fire,
That's a' the learning I desire;
Then tho' I drudge thro' dub an' mire
At pleugh or cart,
My muse, tho' hamely in attire,
May touch the heart.

O for a spunk o' Allan's[r] glee,
Or Fergusson's, the bauld an' slee,
Or bright[14] Lapraik's, my friend to be,
If I can hit it!
That would be lear[s] eneugh for me,
If I could get it.

Now, sir, if ye hae friends enow,
Tho' real friends I b'lieve are few;
Yet, if your catalogue be fu',
I'se no insist:
But, gif ye want ae friend that's true,
I'm on your list.

---

[p] serves. [q] young bullocks. [r] Allan Ramsay's. [s] learning.

I winna blaw about mysel,
As ill I like my fauts to tell;
But friends, an' folk that wish me well,
They sometimes roose[t] me;
Tho' I maun own, as mony still
As far abuse me.

There's ae wee faut they whiles lay to me,
I like the lasses—Gude forgie me!
For mony a plack[u] they wheedle[v] frae me
At dance or fair;
Maybe some ither thing they gie me,
They weel can spare.

But Mauchline Race* or Mauchline Fair,
I should be proud to meet you there:
We'se gie ae night's discharge to care,
If we forgather;
An hae a swap[w] o' rhymin-ware
Wi' ane anither.

The four-gill chap, we'se gar him clatter,
An' kirsen[x] him wi' reekin water;
Syne we'll sit down an' tak our whitter,[y]
To cheer our heart;
An' faith, we'se be acquainted better
Before we part.

Awa ye selfish, warly race,
Wha think that havins,[z] sense, an' grace,

---

[t] encourage. [u] coin. [v] coax. [w] an exchange.
[x] baptise. [y] refreshment. [z] manners.

---

* The race-course at Mauchline was on the high road near the poet's farm.

While I can either fing or whistle,

Your friend

and Servant,

Mossgiel near Machline }
April 1785

Robert Burnes

Facsimile of Burns' signature before he shortened his surname, taken from the close of his epistle to John Lapraik 1st. April, 1785, here traced from the original manuscript as transmitted to Lapraik, now in possession of Robert Jardine Esq. of Castlemilk.

Ev'n love an' friendship should give place
To catch-the-plack !
I dinna like to see your face,
Nor hear your crack.

But ye whom social pleasure charms,
Whose hearts the tide of kindness[15] warms,
Who hold your being on the terms,
"Each aid the others,"
Come to my bowl, come to my arms,
My friends, my brothers !

But, to conclude my lang epistle,
As my auld pen's worn to the gristle,
Twa lines frae you wad gar me fissle,
Who am most fervent,
While I can either sing or whistle,
Your friend and servant.

[We have already seen, in the epistle to Davie, how indulgently Burns regarded the rhyming qualities of his Ayrshire compeers. The song referred to in the third stanza of this poem commended itself so much to his sympathies, that he took this method of becoming acquainted with its supposed author. We say *supposed* author; for in reality it was not Lapraik's own, but a piece he had found in an old magazine, which, by altering its structure a very little, and putting in a Scotch expression here and there, he had the assurance to pass off as his own composition. Burns, who never knew or suspected the plagiarism, afterwards dressed up Lapraik's version and had it printed in Johnson's *Museum*, where it stands, No. 205, set to an air by Oswald. Lockhart praises the opening verse, but remarks that (this song excepted) "it is not easy to understand Burns's admiration of Lapraik's poetry." The reader will find the original poem in the *Weekly Magazine*, October 14, 1773.

John Lapraik was nearly sixty years old when Burns sought acquaintance with him. He had inherited, through a line of ancestors, a small croft near Muirkirk; but happening to borrow money, by a bond thereon, from the Ayr Bank, he became involved in the ruin which soon overtook that unfortunate concern. On the strength of Burns' recorded

admiration, the "Old Scottish Bard" ventured to have his poems printed, at the press of John Wilson, Kilmarnock; and these were published in 1788.

In June 1785, Burns inscribed this, and its companion epistle of April 21st, in his first Common-place Book, where the variations are as follow:—

[1] It touch'd the feelings o'. [2] I pleas'd. [3] The style sae tastie and genteel.
[4] My heart was. [5] a'.

[6] He was a devil,
But had a kind and friendly heart,
Discreet and civil.
[7] Amaist since ever I could spell,
I've dealt in makin' rhymes mysel.

[8] But. [9] at a pleugh or fail. [10] by. [11] of silly senseless asses. [12] Thus sae. [13] then. [14] tight. [15] true generous friendship. At close of verse 10th the expression "by your leave" in all the author's editions, inadvertently reads "by your leaves." The plural of *leaf* is not the poet's intention here.]

SECOND EPISTLE TO J. LAPRAIK.

APRIL 21, 1785.

(KILMARNOCK ED., 1786.)

15

WHILE new-ca'd kye[a] rowte[b] at the stake
An' pownies reek in pleugh or braik,[c]
This hour on e'enin's edge I take,
To own I'm debtor
To honest-hearted, auld Lapraik,
For his kind letter.

Forjesket[d] sair, with weary legs,
Rattlin the corn out-owre the rigs,
Or dealing thro' amang the naigs
Their ten-hours' bite,
My awkwart[1] muse sair pleads and begs
I would na write.

---

[a] newly-driven kine. [b] bellow. [c] a loaded harrow. [d] jaded.

The tapetless,[e] ramfeezl'd[f] hizzie,
She's saft at best an' something lazy:
Quo' she, "ye ken we've been sae busy
This month an' mair,
That trowth, my head is grown right dizzie,
An' something sair."

Her dowff[g] excuses pat me mad;
"Conscience," says I, "ye thowless[h] jade!
I'll write, an' that a hearty blaud,[i]
This vera night;
So dinna ye affront your trade,
But rhyme it right.

"Shall bauld Lapraik, the king[2] o' hearts,
Tho' mankind were a pack o' cartes,
Roose[j] you sae weel for your deserts,
In terms sae friendly;
Yet ye'll neglect to shaw your parts
An' thank him kindly?"

Sae I gat paper in a blink,
An' down gaed[3] stumpie in the ink:
Quoth[4] I, "before I sleep a wink,
I vow I'll close it;
An' if ye winna mak it clink,[k]
By Jove, I'll prose it!"

Sae I've begun to scrawl, but[5] whether
In rhyme, or prose, or baith thegither;

---

[e] thoughtless. [f] overspent. [g] dull, pithless. [h] feeble.
[i] effusion. [j] praise. [k] sound well.

Or some hotch-potch that's rightly neither,
Let time mak proof;
But I shall scribble down some blether[l]
Just clean aff-loof.[m]

My worthy friend, ne'er grudge an' carp,
Tho' fortune use you hard an' sharp;
Come, kittle[n] up your moorland harp
Wi' gleesome touch!
Ne'er mind how Fortune waft and warp;
She's but a b-tch.

She's gien me mony a jirt[o] an' fleg,[p]
Sin' I could striddle owre a rig;
But, by the L—d, tho' I should beg
Wi' lyart[q] pow,
I'll laugh an' sing, an' shake my leg,
As lang's I dow![r]

Now comes the sax-an-twentieth simmer
I've seen the bud upo' the timmer,
Still persecuted by the limmer
Frae year to year;
But yet, despite the kittle kimmer,[s]
I, Rob, am here.[6]

Do ye envy the city gent,
Behint a kist[t] to lie an' sklent;[u]
Or purse-proud, big wi' cent. per cent.
An' muckle wame,
In some bit brugh to represent
A bailie's name?

---

[l] nonsense. [m] off-hand. [n] tickle. [o] jerk. [p] fright. [q] grey.
[r] am able. [s] fickle gossip. [t] chest or counter. [u] tell lies and prevaricate.

Or is't the paughty[v 7] feudal thane,
Wi' ruffl'd sark an' glancing cane,
Wha thinks himsel nae sheep-shank bane,
But lordly stalks ;
While caps and bonnets aff are taen,
As by he walks ?

"O Thou[8] wha gies us each guid gift !
Gie me o' wit an' sense a lift,
Then turn me, if Thou please[9] adrift,
Thro' Scotland wide ;
Wi' cits nor lairds I wadna shift,
In a' their pride ! "

Were this the charter of our state,
"On pain o' hell be rich an' great,"
Damnation then would be our fate,
Beyond remead ;
But, thanks to heaven, that's no the gate
We learn our creed.

For thus the royal mandate ran,
When first the human race began ;
"The social, friendly, honest man,
Whate'er he be—
'Tis *he* fulfils great Nature's plan,
And none but he."

O mandate glorious and divine !
The followers o' the ragged nine *—

[v] supercilious.

* Motherwell, without a word of comment, altered this reading to "ragged followers o' the nine," which certainly seems a more consistent one. Those daughters of Jove surely wore decent drapery.

Poor, thoughtless[10] devils—yet may shine
In glorious light;
While sordid sons o' Mammon's line
Are dark as night!

Tho' here they scrape, an' squeeze,[11] an' growl,
Their worthless[12] nievefu' of a soul
May in some future carcase howl,
The forest's fright;
Or in some[13] day-detesting owl
May shun the light.

Then may Lapraik and Burns arise,[14]
To[15] reach their native, kindred skies,
And sing their pleasures, hopes an' joys,
In some mild sphere;
Still closer knit in friendship's ties,
Each passing year!

[Allan Cunningham says, respecting this poem, "I have heard one of our greatest English poets (Wordsworth) recite with commendation most of the stanzas, pointing out their all but inimitable ease and happiness of thought and language. He remarked, however, that Burns was either fond of out-of-the-way sort of words, or that he *made* them occasionally in his fits of feeling and fancy. The phrase, 'tapetless, ramfeezled hizzie,' in particular, he suspected to be new to the Scotch dialect; but I quoted to him the following passage from a letter of William Cowper, dated August 1787:—'Poor Burns loses much of his deserved praise in this country through our ignorance of his language. I despair of meeting with any Englishman who will take the pains that I have taken to understand him. His candle is light, but shut up in a dark lantern. I lent him to a very sensible neighbour of mine; but the uncouth dialect spoiled all; and, before he had read him through, he was quite *ram-feezled.*'"

The variations in the copy entered in the Common-place Book are these:—

[1] dowie. [2] ace. [3] in went. [4] Says I. [5] But what my theme's to be, or.
[6] This whole stanza is omitted. The poet's own date is April 1785; he was consequently then entering upon his seven-and-twentieth summer.
[7] lordly. [8] May He. [9] though He turn me out. [10] honest.
[11] grunt and scrape. [12] silly. [13] a.
[14] Lapraik and Burness then may rise. [15] And.]

EPISTLE TO WILLIAM SIMSON,

SCHOOLMASTER, OCHILTREE.—MAY 1785.

(KILMARNOCK ED., 1786.)

I GAT your letter, winsome Willie;
Wi' gratefu' heart I thank you brawlie;[a]
Tho' I maun say't, I wad be silly,
And unco vain,
Should I believe, my coaxin billie,[b]
Your flatterin strain.

But I'se believe ye kindly meant it:
I sud be laith to think ye hinted
Ironic satire, sidelins sklented[c]
On my poor musie;
Tho' in sic phraisin[d] terms ye've penn'd it,
I scarce excuse ye.

My senses wad be in a creel,[e]
Should I but dare a hope to speel,[f]
Wi' Allan,* or wi' Gilbertfield,†
The braes o' fame;
Or Fergusson, the writer-chiel,
A deathless name.

(O Fergusson! thy glorious parts
Ill suited law's dry, musty arts!
My curse upon your whunstane hearts,
Ye E'nbrugh gentry!
The tythe o' what ye waste at cartes
Wad stow'd his pantry!)

---

[a] heartily. [b] brother. [c] obliquely directed. [d] cajoling..
[e] basket, a proverbial phrase for "bewildered." [f] climb.

---

* Allan Ramsay. † William Hamilton, of Gilbertfield.

Yet when a tale comes i' my head,
Or lasses gie my heart a screed[g]—
As whiles they're like to be my dead,
(O sad disease!)
I kittle[h] up my rustic reed;
It gies me ease.

Auld Coila,[i] now, may fidge[j] fu' fain,
She's gotten poets[l] o' her ain;
Chiels[k] wha their chanters[l] winna hain,[m]
But tune their lays,
Till echoes a' resound again
Her weel-sung praise.

Nae poet thought her worth his while,
To set her name in measur'd style;
She lay like some unkenn'd-of isle
Beside New Holland,
Or whare wild-meeting oceans boil
Besouth Magellan.

Ramsay Fergusson

Ramsay an' famous Fergusson
Gied Forth an' Tay a lift aboon;
Yarrow an' Tweed, to monie a tune,
Owre Scotland rings;
While Irwin, Lugar, Ayr, an' Doon
Naebody sings.

Th' Illissus, Tiber, Thames, an' Seine,
Glide sweet in monie a tunefu' line:

---

[g] rent. [h] waken. [i] the district of Kyle. [j] excitedly move herself.
[k] young men. [l] musical instruments. [m] save, or withhold.

But, Willie, set your fit to mine,
An' cock your crest;
We'll gar our streams an' burnies shine
Up wi' the best!

We'll sing auld Coila's plains an' fells,[n]
Her moors red-brown wi' heather bells,
Her banks an' braes, her dens and dells,
Whare glorious Wallace
Aft bure the gree,[o] as story tells,
Frae Suthron billies.

At Wallace' name, what Scottish blood
But boils up in a spring-tide flood!
Oft have our fearless fathers strode
By Wallace' side,
Still pressing onward, red-wat-shod,
Or glorious dy'd!

O sweet are Coila's haughs[p] an' woods,
When lintwhites[q] chant amang the buds,
And jinkin hares, in amorous whids,[r]
Their loves enjoy;
While thro' the braes the cushat croods[s]
With wailfu' cry!

Ev'n winter bleak has charms to me,
When winds rave thro' the naked tree;
Or frosts on hills of Ochiltree
Are hoary gray;
Or blinding drifts wild-furious flee,
Dark'ning the day!

---

[n] hill-country. [o] pre-eminence. [p] holms, or level ground near rivers.
[q] linnets. [r] quick motion. [s] coos.

O Nature! a' thy shews an' forms
To feeling, pensive hearts hae charms!
Whether the summer kindly warms,
Wi' life an' light;
Or winter howls, in gusty storms,
The lang, dark night!

The muse, nae poet ever fand her,
Till by himsel he learn'd to wander,
Adown some trottin burn's meander,
An' no think lang:
O sweet to stray, an' pensive ponder
A heart-felt sang!

The warly race may drudge an' drive,
Hog-shouther,[t] jundie,[u] stretch, an' strive;
Let me fair Nature's face descrive,[v]
And I, wi' pleasure,
Shall let the busy, grumbling hive
Bum owre their treasure.

Fareweel, "my rhyme-composing" brither!
We've been owre lang unkenn'd to ither:
Now let us lay our heads thegither,
In love fraternal:
May envy wallop in a tether,
Black fiend, infernal!

While Highlandmen hate tolls an' taxes;
While moorlan herds like guid, fat braxies;[w]

---

[t] like sheep driven. [u] jostle. [v] describe from sight.
[w] dead sheep, a perquisite of the herd.

While terra firma, on her axis,
Diurnal turns;
Count on a friend, in faith an' practice,
In Robert Burns.*

POSTSCRIPT.

My memory's no worth a preen;
I had amaist forgotten clean,
Ye bade me write you what they mean
By this 'new-light,'†
'Bout which our herds sae aft hae been
Maist like to fight.

In days when mankind were but callans[x]
At grammar, logic, an' sic talents,
They took nae pains their speech to balance,
Or rules to gie;
But spak their thoughts in plain, braid lallans,[y]
Like you or me.

In thae auld times, they thought the moon,
Just like a sark,[z] or pair o' shoon,[a]
Wore by degrees, till her last roon[b]
Gaed past their viewin;
An' shortly after she was done
They gat a new ane.

---

[x] boys. [y] Lowland speech. [z] shirt. [a] shoes. [b] shred.

---

* This is perhaps the solitary instance of the poet writing his name with one syllable prior to April 14, 1786. The closing stanza of the second epistle to Lapraik shows the short spelling, but that verse was so altered after the date referred to. The original MS. of the present poem has not been found.

† *New-Light* is a cant phrase in the West of Scotland for those religious opinions which Dr Taylor of Norwich has defended so strenuously.—*R. B.*

This past for certain, undisputed;
It ne'er cam i' their heads to doubt it,
Till chiels gat up an' wad confute it,
An' ca'd it wrang;
An' muckle din there was about it,
Baith loud an' lang.

Some herds, weel learn'd upo' the beuk,
Wad threap[c] auld folk the thing misteuk;
For 'twas the auld moon turn'd a neuk[d]
An' out o' sight,
An' backlins-comin to the leuk,
She grew mair bright.

This was deny'd, it was affirm'd;
The herds and hissels[e] were alarm'd;
The rev'rend gray-beards rav'd an' storm'd,
That beardless laddies
Should think they better were inform'd,
Than their auld daddies.

Frae less to mair, it gaed to sticks;
Frae words an' aiths, to clours[f] an' nicks;[g]
An' monie a fallow gat his licks,
Wi' hearty crunt;[h]
An' some, to learn them for their tricks,
Were hang'd an' brunt.

This game was play'd in mony lands,
An' "auld-light" caddies[i] bure sic hands,

---

[c] declare. [d] corner. [e] flocks or droves. [f] bruises. [g] cuts.
[h] knock on the head. [i] messengers or apostles.

That faith, the youngsters took the sands
Wi' nimble shanks,
Till lairds forbad, by strict commands,
Sic bluidy pranks.

But "new-light" herds gat sic a cowe,[j]
Folk thought them ruin'd stick-an-stowe;[k]
Till now, amaist on ev'ry knowe
Ye'll find ane plac'd;
An' some, their "new-light" fair avow,
Just quite barefac'd.

Nae doubt the "auld-light" flocks are bleatin;
Their zealous herds are vex'd and sweatin;
Mysel, I've even seen them greetin
Wi' girnin spite,
To hear the moon sae sadly lie'd on
By word an' write.

But shortly they will cowe the louns![l]
Some "auld-light" herds in neebor touns
Are mind't, in things they ca' balloons,
To tak a flight;
An' stay ae month amang the moons
An' see them right.

Guid observation they will gie them;
An' when the auld moon's gaun to lea'e them,
The hindmost shaird,[m] they'll fetch it wi' them,
Just i' their pouch;
An' when the "new-light" billies see them,
I think they'll crouch!

---

[j] humbling. [k] completely. [l] humble the rascals. [m] shred.

Sae, ye observe that a' this clatter
Is naething but a "moonshine matter;"
But tho' dull prose-folk Latin splatter
In logic tulyie,
I hope we bardies ken some better
Than mind sic brulyie.

[At the date of this epistle, William Simson was parish schoolmaster at the small village of Ochiltree, situated on the left bank of the river Lugar, at a distance of five miles south from the poet's farm. He appears to have introduced himself to Burns by sending him a complimentary letter, after having seen some of his poems in manuscript, particularly the "Holy Tulyie," to which Burns' postscript specially applies. In 1788, Simson was appointed parish teacher in the town of Cumnock, four miles farther up the Lugar, where he continued till his death in 1815. It does not appear from the poet's correspondence, or otherwise, that the acquaintanceship betwixt Burns and Simson, thus so auspiciously begun in 1785, was continued in after-life. He was succeeded as teacher at Ochiltree in 1788 by a brother, Patrick Simson, who had been formerly parish schoolmaster at Straiton in Carrick. A volume of rhyming-ware, left by William Simson, passed at his death into his brother's possession, and, judging from what has been published of its contents, he seems to have better merited the distinction—a "rhyme-composing brother" of Burns—than either Sillar or Lapraik. He had the good sense not to rush into print like them, on the mere strength of the kindly compliments paid to them by the Ayrshire Bard in his published epistles.

After William Simson's death, his brother Patrick was often visited at Ochiltree by wandering pilgrims, for the sake of the interest conferred by this admired epistle. Allan Cunningham, confounding the one brother with the other, makes reference to William Simson as still surviving in 1834. Through the kindness of the Rev. D. Hogg, Kirkmahoe, we have been shewn "Winsome Willie's" signature, which is our authority for dropping the letter *p* from his surname.

The only variation we have to note is in the sixth stanza: the word *poets*[1] was, in the author's editions prior to 1793, rendered "bardies." The change was probably made at the suggestion of Mr A. F. Tytler, advocate, Edinburgh, who appears to have been entrusted with the revision of the proofs of the poet's later editions.]

ONE NIGHT AS I DID WANDER.

A FRAGMENT.—MAY 1785.

[Cromek, 1808.]

24.

One night as I did wander,
When corn begins to shoot,
I sat me down to ponder,
Upon an auld tree-root:
Auld Ayr ran by before me,
And bicker'd to the seas;
A cushat[a] crooded[b] o'er me,
That echoed through the braes.

[This fragment seems to have been intended as the opening of a poem similar in style to "Man was made to mourn." It has a descriptive ring about it, like the first verse of the "Holy Fair;" and the scenery indicated is not unlike that of Ballochmyle or Barskimming, the two nearest points where the poet could reach the river Ayr from Mauchline. The fragment first appeared in company with another little unfinished piece, in which the poet contemplates crossing the ocean, and being severed from his "Jean."*]

---

[a] wild pigeon. [b] cooed.

---

* This and the three immediately following pieces are in the very peculiar position, that, while they are inserted in the poet's Glenriddell abridgement of his first Common-place Book, between the dates September 1784 and June 1785, they do not appear in the Common-place Book itself, now preserved at Greenock. On examining carefully the latter manuscript, one is forced to the conclusion that these four pieces never at any time formed a portion of that book. Robert Chambers, who never saw the Greenock MS. referred to, was stumbled at so early a date as May 1785 "being attached to these pieces, especially to the song about 'My Jean,'" which, from internal evidence, would seem to belong to the first half of 1786. However, as Burns himself inserted these as forming a portion of his earliest Common-place Book, ending in October 1785, we feel bound to place them in the order of time to which he assigned them.

FRAGMENT OF SONG—"MY JEAN!"

[JOHNSON'S MUSEUM, 1788.]

THO' cruel fate should bid us part,
Far as the pole and line,
Her dear idea round my heart,
Should tenderly entwine.
Tho' mountains rise, and deserts howl,
And oceans roar between;
Yet, dearer than my deathless soul,
I still would love my Jean.

[The affection for Jean Armour displayed here is quite in keeping with the language and sentiment expressed in the "Epistle to Davie." Indeed, on comparing these, the reader will naturally conclude that they must have been composed about the same date. In the one, we find the poet-lover thus expressing himself—

"Her dear idea brings relief and solace to my breast;"

and here he says, almost in the identical words—

"Her dear idea round my heart shall tenderly entwine."

Again, in the "Epistle," he invokes heaven to witness that—

"The life-blood streaming through my heart,
Or my more dear immortal part,
Is not more fondly dear."

And in this little song,—the first sketch of the world-famous "Of a' the airts," &c.—the same language is employed.—

"Yet, dearer than my deathless soul,
I still would love my Jean."

The complete copy of the "Epistle to Davie," which the poet presented to Aiken in 1786, certainly bears the date "January 1785," as we have already noticed; but we must not therefore conclude (as Chambers does) that the *whole* of the poem was completed at so early a date. The references to Jean are thrown in near the *close* of the poem, and if it were now possible to get a sight of the original, as actually forwarded to Sillar in January 1785, it would likely shew very different readings in the three closing stanzas, from those in the printed copy. The early date assigned to that poem was a puzzle to Lockhart, not only from its wonderful perfection in so very intricate and difficult a measure, but also from its glowing celebration of Jean during the very infancy of his acquaintance with her. The air to which it is set in the *Museum* is called "The Northern Lass."]

SONG—RANTIN, ROVIN ROBIN.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

THERE was a lad was born in Kyle,[a]
But whatna day o' whatna style,
I doubt it's hardly worth the while
To be sae nice wi' Robin.
Chor.—Robin was a rovin boy,
Rantin, rovin, rantin, rovin,
Robin was a rovin boy,
Rantin, rovin Robin !

Our monarch's hindmost year but ane
Was five-and-twenty days begun,*
'Twas then a blast o' Janwar' win'
Blew hansel[b] in on Robin.
Robin was, &c.

The gossip keekit[c] in his loof,[d]
Quo' scho, "Wha lives will see the proof,
This waly[e] boy will be nae coof :[f]
I think we'll ca' him Robin."
Robin was, &c.

"He'll hae misfortunes great an' sma',
But ay a heart aboon them a',
He'll be a credit till us a',—
We'll a' be proud o' Robin."
Robin was, &c.

---

[a] The central district of Ayrshire. [b] first gift. [c] looked.
[d] palm. [e] goodly. [f] fool.

---

* Jan. 25, 1759, the date of my bardship's vital existence.—*R. B.*

"But sure as three times three mak nine,
I see by ilka score and line,
This chap will dearly like our kin',
So leeze me[g] on thee! Robin."
Robin was, &c.

"Guid faith," quo' scho, "I doubt you, sir,
Ye gar[h] the lasses * * *
But twenty fauts ye may hae waur
So blessins on thee! Robin."
Robin was, &c.

[Referring to our notes to the two preceding pieces, we may observe that this song displays a vivid forecast of the author's coming fame. Dr Waddell, in the mistaken belief that it was composed in 1784, calls it "a perfect prophetic and pictorial idyll, which must be accepted as a very singular and truthful anticipation of his own future greatness."

The only variation of the poet's text which we have to note is first found in Cunningham's edition (1834). His reading of the two opening lines of the closing stanza is as follows:—

"Gude faith!" quo' sho, "I doubt you gar
The bonie lasses lie aspar."

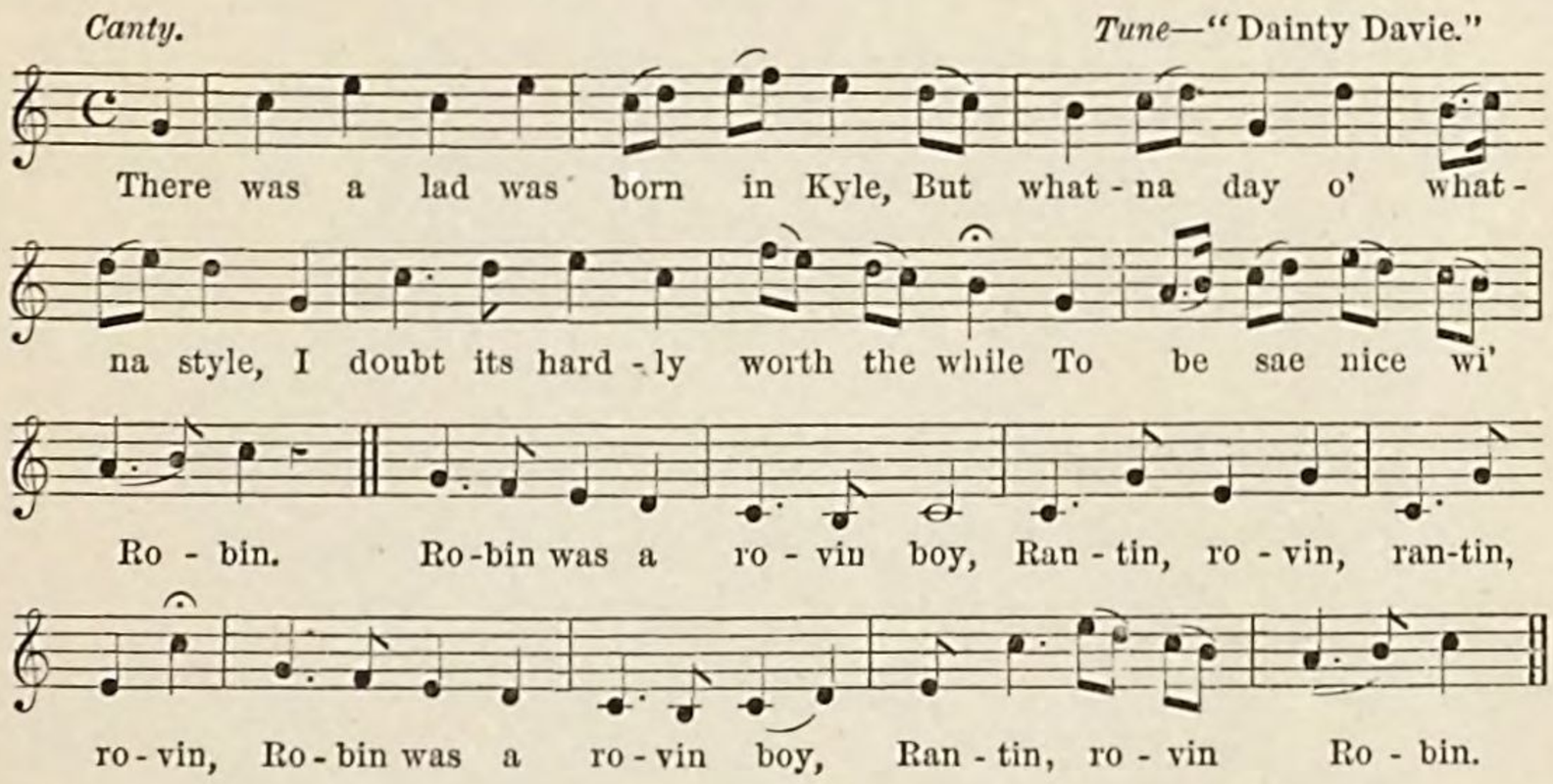
The blank left by Cromek in the second line is thus ingeniously filled up, on what authority Allan does not say. The reverend editor above quoted says on this point:—"All attempts to decorate or to enrich this verse with better rhymes and worse sense, not only vitiate its moral integrity, but destroy its pictorial truthfulness; in a word, vulgarise and debase it. That Cromek's edition is the *correct* edition, there cannot be a shadow of a doubt; and it should be restored and preserved accordingly." Dr Waddell, however, prints, as our poet's genuine text, the three syllables with which Cunningham has filled up Cromek's blank!

Burns composed this song to the tune of "Dainty Davie," and he has anxiously pointed out that the chorus is set to the low part of the melody. Templeton, the eminent vocalist, selected another air—"O gin ye were dead, gudeman"—for his own singing of this song, which necessitated not only an alteration of the words of the chorus to make it fit the music, but a change in other parts of the air to suit it to the words. The tune, "Dainty Davie," is one of our oldest: it appears in

---

[g] set my heart. [h] make.

Playford's collection, 1657; and as a proper vocal set of the melody is now nowhere to be found, we here annex it.



In the MS. of early pieces presented by the poet to Mrs Dunlop, to which we have referred at pp. 11 and 35 *supra*, a remarkable travestie of the foregoing song is inserted: thus:—

There was a birkie born in Kyle,
But whatna day o' whatna style,
I doubt its hardly worth the while
To be sae nice wi' Davie.
Leeze me on thy curly pow,
Bonie Davie, dainty Davie!
Leeze me on thy curly pow,
Thou'se ay my daintie Davie.

The name "Davie," instead of Robin, is thus continued throughout the song, and at verse 4, line 3, instead of "He'll be a credit to us a'," we read, "He'll gie his daddie's name a blaw."]

ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF ROBERT RUISSEAUX.*

(Cromek, 1808.)

Now Robin lies in his last lair,
He'll gabble rhyme, nor sing nae mair;
Cauld poverty, wi' hungry stare,
Nae mair shall fear him;
Nor anxious fear, nor cankert care,
E'er mair come near him.

---

* Fr. for rivulets, or burns, a translation of his own name.

To tell the truth, they seldom fash'd[a] him,
Except the moment that they crush'd him ;
For sune as chance or fate had hush'd 'em
Tho' e'er sae short,
Then wi' a rhyme or sang he lash'd 'em,
And thought it sport.

Tho' he was bred to kintra-wark,
And counted was baith wight[b] and stark,[c]
Yet that was never Robin's mark
To mak a man ;
But tell him, he was learn'd and clark,[d]
Ye roos'd[e] him then !

[We are greatly mistaken if Burns did not compose this "Elegy" after he had issued his prospectus to publish the wonderful Kilmarnock volume. It seems highly probable that it was intended to occupy the last page of that volume, but withdrawn when he had composed the far superior "Poet's Epitaph," which so beautifully closes the work.

Until the original MS. shall be recovered, from which Cromek printed, in the "Reliques," the poet's own abridged copy of his first Common-place Book, the exact chronological position of the preceding four pieces cannot be definitely fixed.]

EPISTLE TO JOHN GOLDIE, IN KILMARNOCK,

AUTHOR OF THE GOSPEL RECOVERED.—AUGUST 1785.

(The Glenriddell MSS., 1874.)

O Gowdie,[1] terror o' the whigs,
Dread o' blackcoats and reverend wigs !
Sour Bigotry on his[2] last legs
Girns an' looks back,
Wishing the ten Egyptian plagues
May[3] seize you quick.

---

[a] troubled, [b] strong. [c] thorough, complete. [d] literary.
[e] roused his ambition.

Poor gapin, glowrin Superstition!
Wae's me, she's in a sad condition:
Fye! bring *Black Jock*,* her state physician,
To see her water:
Alas, there's ground for great suspicion
She'll ne'er get better.

Enthusiasm's past redemption,
Gane in a gallopin consumption:
Not a' her quacks, wi' a' their gumption,[a]
Can[4] ever mend her;
Her feeble pulse gies strong presumption,
She'll soon surrender.[5]

Auld Orthodoxy lang did grapple,
For every hole to get a stapple;[b]
But now she fetches at the thrapple,
An' fights for breath;
Haste, gie her name up in the chapel,†
Near unto death.[6]

It's[7] you an' *Taylor*‡ are the chief
To blame for a' this black mischief;[8]
But could the L—d's ain folk get[9] leave,
A toom tar barrel
An' twa red peats wad bring relief,
And end the quarrel.

For me, my skill's but very sma',
An' skill in prose I've nane ava';

[a] acuteness. [b] ~~tube, like a tobacco pipe~~ plug, or stopper.

* The Rev. J. Russell, Kilmarnock.—*R. B.*
† Mr Russell's Kirk.—*R. B.* ‡ Dr Taylor of Norwich.—*R. B.*

But quietlenswise,[c] between us twa,
Weel may ye speed!
And tho' they sud you sair misca',
Ne'er fash[d] your head.

E'en swinge the dogs, and thresh them sicker![e]
The mair they squeel ay chap[f] the thicker;
And still 'mang hands a hearty bicker
O' something stout;
It gars an owthor's[g] pulse beat quicker,
And helps his wit.

There's naething like the honest nappy;[h]
Whare'll ye e'er see men sae happy,
Or women sonsie,[i] saft and sappy,
'Tween morn and morn,
As them wha like to taste the drappie,
In glass or horn?

I've seen me daez't[j] upon a time,
I scarce could wink or see a styme;[k]
Just ae hauf-mutchkin'[l] does me prime,
(Ought less, is little,)
Then back I rattle on the rhyme,
As gleg's a whittle.[m]

[The person thus addressed was a note-worthy individual. His father was the miller at Craigmill on Cessnock water in Galston parish, where the future philosopher was born in 1717. He showed an early aptitude for science and mechanical skill, and soon became an adept in geometry, architecture, and astronomy. While yet a young man, he

---

[c] in a quiet manner. [d] perplex. [e] with precision. [f] lay on.
[g] an author's. [h] strong drink, generally applied to ale.
[i] buxom. [j] stupid. [k] the faintest form.
[l] two gills, a half-pint. [m] sharp as a knife.

removed to Kilmarnock, where he carried on business, first as a cabinet-maker, and afterwards as an extensive wine and spirit merchant; but all his leisure time was devoted to his favourite scientific pursuits and mechanical contrivances. In his religious views he was originally orthodox, and joined the Antiburgher congregation at Kilmaurs; but, before he was fifty years old, his opinions underwent a radical change. These he carried much beyond the Arminianism of the New Light party. In 1780, he published his opinions in three 8vo volumes printed at Glasgow, of which a second edition appeared in 1785. These essays were extensively read, and the work was popularly termed "Gowdie's Bible."

At the date of Burns' epistle to him, Goldie was 68 years old. Whether the poet introduced himself by this means or had previously known him, it is impossible to tell; but certain it is that the bard relied much on Goldie's friendship and advice during his visits to Kilmarnock while his poems were at the press. We hear nothing of Goldie, however, in the poet's prose correspondence. His son was Lieut. Goldie, R.N., who entered the navy in 1803. The old gentleman himself survived to 1811.

This poem was first published in a very imperfect form in Stewart and Meikle's Tracts, 1799. There it has only five stanzas—the third and fourth being transposed, and the four concluding ones entirely wanting. The two closing verses of the present complete copy were published by Cromek in 1808, as a stray fragment found in one of the poet's Common-place Books. Allan Cunningham took upon him to aver that he had seen a copy of the first *Epistle to Lapraik*, of which they formed a part, and were introduced between the fourth-last and third-last verses. This, we suspect, was one of Allan's many hap-hazard statements.

The variations in Stewart are:—

[1] Goudie. [2] her. [3] wad. [4] will. [5] Death soon will end her.
[6] But now she's got an unco ripple,
Haste, gie her name up i' the chapel
Nigh unto death;
See how she fetches at the thrapple,
And gasps for breath.
'Tis you. [8] Wha are to blame for this mischief. [9] gat.]

THIRD EPISTLE TO J. LAPRAIK.

(Lapraik's Poems, 1788.)

Guid speed and furder to you, Johnie,
Guid health, hale han's an' weather bonie;
Now, when ye're nickin[a] down fu' cannie
The staff o' bread,[b]
May ye ne'er want a stoup o' bran'y
To clear your head.

May Boreas never thresh your rigs,
Nor kick your rickles[c] aff their legs,
Sendin the stuff o'er muirs an' haggs[d]
Like drivin wrack;
But may the tapmost grain that wags
Come to the sack.

I'm bizzie, too, an' skelpin at it,
But bitter, daudin[e] showers hae wat it;
Sae my auld stumpie pen I gat it
Wi' muckle wark,
An' took my jocteleg[f] an' whatt[g] it,
Like ony clark.

It's now twa month that I'm your debtor,
For your braw, nameless, dateless letter.
Abusin me for harsh ill-nature
On holy men,
While deil a hair yoursel ye're better,
But mair profane.

---

[a] cutting. [b] a Bible term for "bread, the staff of life."
[c] ricks of cut grain. [d] mosses. [e] pelting.
[f] pen-knife. [g] cut.

But let the kirk-folk ring their bells,
Let's sing about our noble sel's:
We'll cry nae jads frae heathen hills
To help, or roose[h] us;
But browster wives an' whisky stills,
They are the muses.

Your friendship, sir, I winna quat it,
An' if ye mak' objections at it,
Then hand in neive[i] some day we'll knot it,
An' witness take,
An' when wi' usquabae we've wat it,
It winna break.

But if the beast and branks be spar'd
Till kye be gaun without the herd,
And a' the vittel in the yard,
And theekit[j] right,
I mean your ingle-side to guard
Ae winter night.

Then muse-inspirin aquavitæ
Shall mak us baith sae blythe and witty,
Till ye forget ye're auld an' gatty,[k]
And be as canty
As ye were nine year less than thretty—
Sweet ane an' twenty!

But stooks are cowpet[l] wi' the blast,
And now the sinn keeks[m] in the west,
Then I maun rin amang the rest,
An' quat my chanter;
Sae I subscribe mysel in haste,
Yours, Rab the Ranter.

Sept. 13, 1785.

---

[h] inspire. [i] fist. [j] covered in. [k] paunchy. [l] overturned. [m] peeps.

EPISTLE TO THE REV. JOHN M'MATH,

INCLOSING A COPY OF "HOLY WILLIE'S PRAYER," WHICH HE HAD REQUESTED, SEPT. 17, 1785.

(Cromek, 1808.)

While at the stook the shearers[a] cow'r[b]
To shun the bitter blaudin'[c] show'r,
Or in gulravage rinnin[d] scowr ;[e]
To pass the time,
To you I dedicate the hour
In idle rhyme.

My musie, tir'd wi' mony a sonnet
On gown, an' ban', an' douse[f] black bonnet,
Is grown right eerie[g] now she's done it,
Lest they shou'd blame her,
An' rouse their holy thunder on it
And anathem her.

I own 'twas rash, an' rather hardy,
That I a simple, country bardie,
Shou'd meddle wi' a pack sae sturdy,
Wha, if they ken me,
Can easy, wi' a single wordie,
Louse h—ll upon me.

But I gae mad at their grimaces,
Their sighin, cantin, grace-proud faces,
Their three-mile prayers, an' hauf-mile graces,
Their raxin[h] conscience,
Whase greed, revenge, and pride disgraces
Waur nor their nonsense.

---

[a] reapers. [b] crouch. [c] beating. [d] confused scamper.
[e] escape. [f] grave. [g] frightened. [h] stretching.

There's Gaw'n, misca'd waur than a beast,
Wha has mair honor in his breast
Than mony scores as guid's the priest
Wha sae abused him:
And may a bard no crack his jest
What way they've used him?

See him, the poor man's friend in need,*
The gentleman in word an' deed—
An' shall his fame an' honor bleed
By worthless skellums,[i]
An' not a muse erect her head
To cowe the blellums?[j]

O Pope, had I thy satire's darts
To gie the rascals their deserts,
I'd rip their rotten, hollow hearts,
An' tell aloud
Their jugglin hocus-pocus arts
To cheat the crowd.

God knows, I'm no the thing I shou'd be,
Nor am I even the thing I cou'd be,
But twenty times I rather would be
An atheist clean,
Than under gospel colors hid be
Just for a screen.

An honest man may like a glass,
An honest man may like a lass,

[i] wretches. [j] blusterers.

* This couplet was afterwards repeated, in the Dedication to Gavin Hamilton.

But mean revenge, an' malice fause
He'll still disdain,
An' then cry zeal for gospel laws,
Like some we ken.

They take religion in their mouth;
They talk o' mercy, grace, an' truth,
For what? to gie their malice skouth[k]
On some puir wight,
An' hunt him down, owre right and ruth,
To ruin streicht.

All hail, Religion! maid divine!
Pardon a muse sae mean as mine,
Who in her rough imperfect line
Thus daurs to name thee;
To stigmatise false friends of thine
Can ne'er defame thee.

Tho' blotch't and foul wi' mony a stain,
An' far unworthy of thy train,
With trembling voice I tune my strain
To join with those
Who boldly dare thy cause maintain
In spite of foes:

In spite o' crowds, in spite o' mobs,
In spite o' undermining jobs,
In spite o' dark banditti stabs
At worth an' merit,
By scoundrels, even wi' holy robes,
But hellish spirit.

---

[k] scope.

O Ayr! my dear, my native ground,
Within thy presbyterial bound
A candid liberal band is found
Of public teachers,
As men, as christians too, renown'd,
An' manly preachers.

Sir, in that circle you are nam'd;
Sir, in that circle you are fam'd;
An' some, by whom your doctrine's blam'd
(Which gies ye honor)
Even, sir, by them your heart's esteem'd,
An' winning manner.

Pardon this freedom I have ta'en,
An' if impertinent I've been,
Impute it not, good sir, in ane
Whase heart ne'er wrang'd ye,
But to his utmost would befriend
Ought that belang'd ye.

[The gentleman to whom the above epistle is addressed was assistant and successor to the Rev. Peter Wodrow, minister of Tarbolton, then in declining health through the infirmities of old age. "Auld Wodrow," and his young helper, M'Math, are both complimented in "The Twa Herds," as able preachers, of the liberal or "moderate" stamp. In course of years, Mr M'Math fell into a morbid condition of mind, and eventually took to hard drinking, and died in the Isle of Mull, in 1825.

The two preceding epistles, dated within a few days of each other, specially refer to the bad harvest of 1785, which tended to discourage the poet at his farming, and perhaps to drive him to the muse for consolation. The signature to the first of these is a sobriquet borrowed from the popular song of "Maggie Lauder."]

SECOND EPISTLE TO DAVIE,

A BROTHER POET.

(SILLAR'S POEMS, 1789.)

AULD NEIBOR,

I'm three times doubly o'er your debtor,
For your auld-farrant,[a] frien'ly letter;
Tho' I maun say't, I doubt ye flatter,
Ye speak sae fair;
For my puir, silly, rhymin clatter
Some less maun sair.[b]

Hale be your heart, hale be your fiddle,
Lang may your elbuck[c] jink an' diddle,
To cheer you thro' the weary widdle
O' war'ly cares;
Till bairns' bairns kindly cuddle[d]
Your auld, grey hairs.*

But Davie, lad, I'm rede ye're glaikit;[e]
I'm tauld the muse ye hae negleckit;
An' gif it's sae, ye sud be licket[f]
Until ye fyke;[g]
Sic hauns[h] as you sud ne'er be faiket,[i]
Be hain't[j] wha like.

For me, I'm on Parnassus' brink,
Rivin the words to gar[k] them clink;
Whyles[l] daez't[m] wi' love, whyles daez't wi' drink,
Wi' jads or masons;
An' whyles, but ay owre late, I think
Braw sober lessons.

---

[a] droll. [b] serve. [c] elbow. [d] fondle. [e] thoughtless. [f] beaten. [g] shrug.
[h] handy fellows. [i] dispensed with. [j] saved from exertion. [k] make.
[l] sometimes. [m] bewildered.

* This verse was repeated almost verbatim in the Epistle to Major Logan.

Of a' the thoughtless sons o' man,
Commen' me to the bardie clan;
Except it be some idle plan
O' rhymin clink—
The devil-haet, that I sud ban[n]—
They ever think.

Nae thought, nae view, nae scheme o' livin,
Nae cares to gie us joy or grievin,
But just the pouchie put the nieve in,
An' while ought's there,
Then, hiltie skiltie, we gae scrievin,[o]
An' fash[p] nae mair.

Leeze me[q] on rhyme! it's ay a treasure,
My chief, amaist my only pleasure;
At hame, a-fiel', at wark, or leisure,
The muse, poor hizzie!
Tho' rough an' raploch[r] be her measure
She's seldom lazy.

Haud to the muse, my dainty Davie:
The warl' may play you monie a shavie;
But for the muse, she'll never leave ye,
Tho' e'er sae puir,
Na, even tho' limpin wi' the spavie
Frae door to door.

[If David Sillar, then a grocer in Irvine, neglected the muses at the date of this epistle (supposed to be about October 1785), he was soon stimulated to exertion by the success of Burns' first publication, and induced to imitate him, so far as could be done by typography and stationery. This epistle of Burns he introduced in the early pages of his book; but, in truth, it was the only valuable thing in the volume. Davie played on the violin a little: hence the reference in the second stanza. The phrase "brother fiddler" is also accorded to him, see p. 95.]

---

[n] swear. [o] careering. [p] bother. [q] commend me to. [r] coarse.

SONG.—YOUNG PEGGY BLOOMS.

(JOHNSON'S MUSEUM, 1787.)

YOUNG Peggy blooms our boniest lass,
Her blush is like the morning,
The rosy dawn, the springing grass,
With early gems adorning.
Her eyes outshine the radiant beams
That gild the passing shower,
And glitter o'er the crystal streams,
And cheer each fresh'ning flower.

Her lips, more than the cherries bright,
A richer dye has graced them;
They charm th' admiring gazer's sight,
And sweetly tempt to taste them;
Her smile is as the evening mild,
When feather'd pairs are courting,
And little lambkins wanton wild,
In playful bands disporting.

Were Fortune lovely Peggy's foe,
Such sweetness would relent her;
As blooming Spring unbends the brow
Of surly, savage Winter.
Detraction's eye no aim can gain,
Her winning pow'rs to lessen;
And fretful Envy grins in vain
The poison'd tooth to fasten.

Ye Pow'rs of Honor, Love, and Truth,
From ev'ry ill defend her!
Inspire the highly-favour'd youth
The destinies intend her:

Still fan the sweet connubial flame
Responsive in each bosom;
And bless the dear parental name
With many a filial blossom.

[Burns seems to have taken considerable pains with this fine composition, which, though highly finished, is somewhat too artificial to have been a spontaneous outburst of personal passion. The subject of it was Miss Peggy Kennedy, the daughter of a Carrick laird, and a relative of Mrs Gavin Hamilton. The poet was introduced to her when she was on a visit to the Hamiltons. She was then a blooming young woman of seventeen, and was understood to be betrothed to the youthful representative of the oldest and richest family in Galloway; but, according to Chambers, "a train of circumstances lay in her path, which eventually caused the loss of her good name, and her early death." We shall again have occasion to refer to this lady as the supposed subject of another lyric by Burns, "Ye banks and braes o' bonie Doon." The poet enclosed the present verses to Miss Kennedy in a letter, concluding thus: "That the arrows of misfortune may never reach your heart—that the snares of villany may never beset you in the road of life—that INNOCENCE may hand you by the path of HONOUR to the dwelling of PEACE, is the sincere wish of him who has the honour to be," &c.]

c. II. 33. 335.

SONG.—FAREWELL TO BALLOCHMYLE.

(JOHNSON'S MUSEUM, 1790.)

6, b.

THE Catrine woods were yellow seen,
The flowers decay'd on Catrine lee,
Nae lav'rock sang on hillock green,
But nature sicken'd on the e'e.
Thro' faded groves Maria sang,
Hersel in beauty's bloom the while;
And ay the wild-wood echoes rang,
Fareweel the braes o' Ballochmyle!

Low in your wintry beds, ye flowers,
Again ye'll flourish fresh and fair;
Ye birdies dumb, in with'ring bowers,
Again ye'll charm the vocal air.

But here, alas! for me nae mair
Shall birdie charm, or floweret smile;
Fareweel the bonie banks of Ayr,
Fareweel, fareweel! sweet Ballochmyle!

[This beautiful lyric was composed about the same time as the preceding song. Ballochmyle had long been the property of the Whitefoord family; but, about this period, Sir John Whitefoord's misfortunes, arising chiefly through his connections with the Ayr Bank, obliged him to sell his estates. The "Maria" of this song was Miss Whitefoord, who afterwards became Mrs Cranstoun. The "Catrine Woods," and "Catrine Lea," are in the immediate neighbourhood of Ballochmyle, and were then the property of Professor Dugald Stewart. The fine scenery there is at the distance of about two miles from Mauchline, and was a favourite haunt of Burns while he lived at Mossgiel.]

FRAGMENT.—HER FLOWING LOCKS.

(Cromek, 1808.)

Her flowing locks, the raven's wing,
Adown her neck and bosom hing;
How sweet unto that breast to cling,
And round that neck entwine her!

Her lips are roses wat wi' dew,
O, what a feast, her bonie mou!
Her cheeks a mair celestial hue,
A crimson still diviner!

[This little "artist's sketch" of female loveliness has no certain history attached to it. Cunningham connects it with a Mauchline incident; and, if he is right in that respect, it seems probable that our poet intended it as a portrait of Miss Whitefoord.]

HALLOWEEN.*

[KILMARNOCK ED., 1786.]

The following poem will, by many readers, be well enough understood; but for the sake of those who are unacquainted with the manners and traditions of the country where the scene is cast, notes are added, to give some account of the principal charms and spells of that night, so big with prophecy to the peasantry in the west of Scotland. The passion of prying into futurity makes a striking part of the history of human nature in its rude state, in all ages and nations; and it may be some entertainment to a philosophic mind, if any such honour the author with a perusal, to see the remains of it among the more enlightened in our own.

"Yes! let the rich deride, the proud disdain,
The simple pleasures of the lowly train;
To me more dear, congenial to my heart,
One native charm, than all the gloss of art."

GOLDSMITH.

Goldsmith
26.

UPON that night, when fairies light
On Cassilis Downans† dance,
Or owre the lays,[a] in splendid blaze,
On sprightly coursers prance;
Or for Colean the rout is ta'en,
Beneath the moon's pale beams;
There, up the Cove,‡ to stray an' rove,
Amang the rocks and streams
To sport that night:

---

[a] leas, or sloping fields.

---

* Is thought to be a night when witches, devils, and other mischief-making beings are all abroad on their baneful, midnight errands; particularly those aerial people, the fairies, are said, on that night, to hold a grand anniversary.—*R. B.*

† Certain little, romantic, rocky, green hills, in the neighbourhood of the ancient seat of the Earls of Cassilis.—*R. B.*

‡ A noted cavern near Colean House, called the Cove of Colean; which, as well as Cassilis Downans, is famed, in the country, for being a favourite haunt of the fairies.—*R. B.*

Amang the bonie winding banks,
Where Doon rins, wimplin,[b] clear;
Where Bruce * ance ruled the martial ranks,
An' shook his Carrick spear;
Some merry, friendly, country-folks
Together did convene,
To burn their nits, an' pou their stocks,
An' haud their Halloween
Fu' blythe that night.

The lasses feat,[c] an' cleanly neat,
Mair braw than when they're fine;
Their faces blythe, fu' sweetly kythe,[d]
Hearts leal,[e] an' warm, an' kin':
The lads sae trig, wi' wooer-babs[f]
Weel-knotted on their garten;
Some unco blate,[g] an' some wi' gabs[h]
Gar lasses' hearts gang startin
Whyles fast at night.

Then, first an' foremost, thro' the kail,[i]
Their 'stocks' † maun a' be sought ance;
They steek their een, an' grape[j] an' wale[k]
For muckle anes, an' straught anes.

---

[b] meandering. [c] trim. [d] appear. [e] loyal. [f] love-knots.
[g] shy. [h] chatter. [i] cabbage-plot. [j] grope. [k] select.

---

* The famous family of that name, the ancestors of ROBERT, the great deliverer of his country, were Earls of Carrick.—*R. B.*

† The first ceremony of Halloween is, pulling each a "stock," or plant of kail. They must go out, hand in hand, with eyes shut, and pull the first they meet with: its being big or little, straight or crooked, is prophetic of the size and shape of the grand object of all their spells—the husband or wife. If any "yird," or earth, stick to the root, that is "tocher," or fortune; and the taste of the "custoc," that is, the heart of the stem, is indicative of the natural temper and disposition. Lastly, the stems, or, to give them their proper appellation, the "runts," are placed somewhere above the head of the door; and the Christian names of people whom chance brings into the house are, according to the priority of placing the "runts," the names in question.—*R. B.*

Poor hav'rel[l] Will fell aff the drift,
An' wandered thro' the 'bow-kail,'
An' pou't, for want o' better shift,
A runt, was like a sow-tail
Sae bow't[m] that night.

Then, straught or crooked, yird or nane,
They roar an' cry a' throw'ther;
The vera wee-things, toddlin,[n] rin,
Wi' stocks out owre their shouther:
An' gif the custok's sweet or sour,
Wi' joctelegs[o] they taste them;
Syne coziely,[p] aboon the door,
Wi' cannie care, they've plac'd them
To lie that night.

The lasses staw[q] frae 'mang them a',
To pou their stalks o' corn;*
But Rab slips out, an' jinks about,
Behint the muckle thorn:
He grippet Nelly hard an' fast;
Loud skirl'd[r] a' the lasses;
But her tap-pickle maist was lost,
Whan kiutlin in the 'fause-house'†
Wi' him that night.

---

[l] half-witted. [m] crooked. [n] tottering. [o] pocket-knives.
[p] snugly. [q] stole away. [r] screamed with laughter.

---

* They go to the barnyard, and pull each, at three several times, a stalk of oats. If the third stalk wants the "top-pickle," that is, the grain at the top of the stalk, the party in question will come to the marriage-bed anything but a maid.—*R. B.*

† When the corn is in a doubtful state, by being too green or wet, the stack-builder, by means of old timber, &c., makes a large apartment in his stack, wit an opening in the side which is fairest exposed to the wind: this he calls a "fause-house."—*R. B.*

The auld guid-wife's weel-hoordet nits*
Are round an' round divided,
An' mony lads an' lasses' fates
Are there that night decided:
Some kindle couthie,[s] side by side,
An' burn thegither trimly;
Some start awa wi' saucy pride,
An' jump out owre the chimlie
Fu' high that night.

Jean slips in twa, wi' tentie e'e;
Wha 'twas, she wadna tell;
But this is *Jock*, an' this is *me*,
She says in to hersel:
He bleez'd owre her, an' she owre him,
As they wad never màir part;
Till fuff! he started up the lum,
And Jean had e'en a sàir heart
To see't that night.

Poor Willie, wi' his bow-kail runt,
Was brunt wi' primsie[t] Mallie;
An' Mary, nae doubt, took the drunt,[u]
To be compar'd to Willie:
Mall's nit lap out, wi' pridefu' fling,
An' her ain fit, it brunt it;
While Willie lap, an' swoor by 'jing,'
'Twas just the way he wanted
To be that night.

---

[s] agreeable. [t] prudish. [u] pet.

---

* Burning the nuts is a favourite charm. They name the lad and lass to each particular nut, as they lay them in the fire; and according as they burn quietly together, or start from beside one another, the course and issue of the courtship will be.—*R. B.*

Nell had the 'fause-house' in her min,'
She pits hersel an' Rob in;
In loving bleeze they sweetly join,
Till white in ase they're sobbin:
Nell's heart was dancin at the view;
She whisper'd Rob to leuk for't:
Rob, stownins,[v] prie'd[w] her bonie mou,
Fu' cozie in the neuk for't,
Unseen that night.

But Merran sat behint their backs,
Her thoughts on Andrew Bell;
She lea'es them gashin[x] at their cracks,[y]
An' slips out-by hersel:
She thro' the yard the nearest taks,
An' for the kiln she goes then,
An' darklins grapet for the 'bauks,'[z]
And in the 'blue-clue'* throws then,
Right fear't that night.

An' ay she win't,[a] an' ay she swat—
I wat she made nae jaukin;[b]
Till something held within the pat,
Guid L—d! but she was quaukin!
But whether 'twas the deil himsel,
Or whether 'twas a bauk-en',
Or whether it was Andrew Bell,
She did na wait on talkin
To spier that night.

---

[v] stealthily. [w] tasted. [x] engaged. [y] conversation,
[z] cross-beams. [a] winded. [b] delay.

---

* Whoever would, with success, try this spell, must strictly observe these directions: Steal out, all alone, to the kiln, and, darkling, throw into the "pot" a clue of blue yarn; wind it in a new clue off the old one; and, towards the latter end, something will hold the thread: demand, "Wha hauds?" *i.e.*, who holds? and answer will be returned from the kiln-pot, by naming the christian and surname of your future spouse.—*R. B.*

Wee Jenny to her graunie says,
"Will ye go wi' me, graunie?
I'll eat the apple at the glass,*
I gat frae uncle Johnie:"
She fuff't her pipe wi' sic a lunt,[c]
In wrath she was sae vap'rin,[d]
She notic't na an aizle[e] brunt
Her braw, new, worset apron
Out thro' that night.

"Ye little skelpie-limmer's-face!†
I daur you try sic sportin,
As seek the foul thief ony place,
For him to spae[f] your fortune:
Nae doubt but ye may get a sight!
Great cause ye hae to fear it;
For mony a ane has gotten a fright,
An' liv'd an' died deleeret,
On sic a night.

"Ae hairst afore the Sherra-moor,
I mind't as weel's yestreen—
I was a gilpey[g] then, I'm sure
I was na past fyfteen:
The simmer had been cauld an' wat,
An' stuff was unco green;
An' ay a rantin kirn[h] we gat,
An' just on Halloween
It fell that night.

---

[c] quantity of smoke. [d] agitated. [e] cinder.
[f] foretell. [g] young romp. [h] harvest-home.

---

* Take a candle and go alone to a looking-glass; eat an apple before it, and some traditions say, you should comb your hair all the time; the face of your conjugal companion, *to be*, will be seen in the glass, as if peeping over your shoulder.—*R. B.*

† A technical term in female scolding.—*R. B.*

"Our 'stibble-rig'[i] was Rab M'Graen,
A clever, sturdy fallow;
His sin[j] gat Eppie Sim wi' wean,
That liv'd in Achmacalla:
He gat hemp-seed,* I mind it weel,
An' he made unco light o't;
But mony a day was by himsel,
He was sae sairly frighted
That vera night."

Then up gat fechtin Jamie Fleck,
An' he swoor by his conscience,
That he could saw hemp-seed a peck;
For it was a' but nonsense:
The auld guidman raught[k] down the pock,
An' out a handfu' gied him;
Syne bad him slip frae 'mang the folk,
Sometime when nae ane see'd him,
An' try't that night.

He marches thro' amang the stacks,
Tho' he was something sturtin;[l]
The graip he for a harrow taks,
An' haurls[m] at his curpin:[n]
And ev'ry now an' then, he says,
"Hemp-seed I saw thee,

---

[i] leader of the reapers. [j] son. [k] reached. [l] staggered. [m] drags. [n] rear.

---

* Steal out, unperceived, and sow a handful of hemp-seed, harrowing it with anything you can conveniently draw after you. Repeat, now and then—"Hemp-seed I saw thee, hemp-seed I saw thee; and him (or her) that is to be my true love, come after me and pou thee." Look over your left shoulder, and you will see the appearance of the person invoked, in the attitude of pulling hemp. Some traditions say, "Come after me and shaw thee," that is, show thyself; in which case, it simply appears. Others omit the harrowing, and say, "Come after me and harrow thee."—*R. B.*

An' her that is to be my lass
Come after me, an' draw thee
As fast this night."

He whistl'd up 'Lord Lenox' March,'
To keep his courage cheery;
Altho' his hair began to arch,
He was sae fley'd[o] an' eerie:[p]
Till presently he hears a squeak,
An' then a grane an' gruntle;
He by his shouther gae a keek,
An' tumbled wi' a wintle[q]
Out-owre that night.

He roar'd a horrid murder-shout,
In dreadfu' desperation!
An' young an' auld come rinnin out,
An' hear the said narration:
He swoor 'twas hilchin[r] Jean M'Craw,
Or crouchie[s] Merran Humphie—
Till stop! she trotted thro' them a';
An' wha was it but grumphie[t]
Asteer that night?

Meg fain wad to the barn gaen,
To winn three wechts o' naething;*

---

[o] timorous. [p] frightened. [q] somersault. [r] halting. [s] crook-backed. [t] the pig.

* This charm must likewise be performed unperceived and alone. You go to the barn, and open both doors, taking them off the hinges, if possible; for there is danger that the being about to appear, may shut the doors, and do you some mischief. Then take that instrument used in winnowing the corn, which in our country dialect we call a "wecht," and go through all the attitudes of letting down corn against the wind. Repeat it three times, and the third time, an apparition will pass through the barn, in at the windy door, and out at the other, having both the figure in question, and the appearance or retinue, marking the employment or station in life. —*R. B.*

But for to meet the deil her lane,
She pat but little faith in:
She gies the herd a pickle[u] nits,
An' twa red cheekit apples,
To watch, while for the barn she sets,
In hopes to see Tam Kipples
That vera night.

She turns the key wi' cannie thraw,
An' owre the threshold ventures;
But first on Sawnie gies a ca',
Syne bauldly in she enters:
A ratton rattl'd up the wa',
An' she cry'd, L—d preserve her!
An' ran thro' midden-hole an' a',
An' pray'd wi' zeal and fervour,
Fu' fast that night.

They hoy't[v] out Will, wi' sair advice;
They hecht[w] him some fine braw ane;
It chanc'd the stack he faddom't thrice,*
Was timmer-propt for thrawin:
He taks a swirlie[x] auld moss-oak
For some black, grousome carlin;
An' loot a winze,[y] an' drew a stroke,
Till skin in blypes[z] cam haurlin
Aff's nieves that night.

---

[u] few. [v] inveigled. [w] promised.
[x] crooked. [y] an oath. [z] shreds.

---

* Take an opportunity of going unnoticed to a "bear-stack," and fathom it three times round. The last fathom of the last time, you will catch in your arms the appearance of your future conjugal yoke-fellow.—*R. B.*

A wanton widow Leezie was,
As cantie as a kittlen ;
But och ! that night, amang the shaws,[a]
She gat a fearfu' settlin !
She thro' the whins, an' by the cairn,
An' owre the hill gaed scrievin ;[b]
Whare three lairds' lan's met at a burn,*
To dip her left sark-sleeve in,
Was bent that night.

Whyles owre a linn the burnie plays,
As thro' the glen it wimpl't ;[c]
Whyles round a rocky scaur[d] it strays,
Whyles in a wiel[e] it dimpl't ;
Whyles glitter'd to the nightly rays,
Wi' bickerin, dancin dazzle ;
Whyles cookit[f] underneath the braes,
Below the spreading hazle
Unseen that night.

Amang the brachens,[g] on the brae,
Between her an' the moon,
The deil, or else an outler quey,[h]
Gat up an' ga'e a croon :

---

[a] woods. [b] careering. [c] sported. [d] bank of red earth.
[e] eddy. [f] crept. [g] ferns. [h] wandered young cow.

---

* You go out, one or more (for this is a social spell), to a south running spring, or rivulet, where "three lairds' lands meet," and dip your left shirt sleeve. Go to bed in sight of a fire, and hang your wet sleeve before it to dry. Lie awake, and, some time near midnight, an apparition, having the exact figure of the grand object in question, will come and turn the sleeve, as if to dry the other side of it.—*R. B.*

Poor Leezie's heart maist lap the hool ;[i]
Near lav'rock[j]-height she jumpet,
But mist a fit, an' in the pool
Out-owre the lugs she plumpet,
Wi' a plunge that night.

In order, on the clean hearth-stane,
The 'luggies'* three are ranged ;
An' ev'ry time great care is ta'en
To see them duly changed :
Auld uncle John, wha wedlock's joys
Sin' 'Mar's-year'† did desire,
Because he gat the toom dish thrice,
He heav'd them on the fire,
In wrath that night.

Wi' merry sangs, an' friendly cracks,
I wat they did na weary ;
And unco tales, an' funnie jokes—
Their sports were cheap an' cheery :
Till butter'd sow'ns,‡ wi' fragrant lunt,[k]
Set a' their gabs a-steerin ;[l]
Syne, wi' a social glass o' strunt,[m]
They parted aff careerin
Fu' blythe that night.

[The author's own notes to this long descriptive poem are so complete, that we require to add very little to the information they contain. The

[i] sheath. [j] lark. [k] steam. [l] tongues wagging. [m] whisky.

* Take three dishes, put clean water in one, foul water in another, and leave the third empty ; blindfold a person, and lead him to the hearth where the dishes are ranged ; he (or she) dips the left hand : if by chance in the clean water, the future (husband or) wife will come to the bar of matrimony a maid ; if in the foul, a widow ; if in the empty dish, it foretells, with equal certainty, no marriage at all. It is repeated three times, and every time the arrangement of the dishes is altered.—*R. B.*

† 1715, when the Earl of Mar headed an insurrection.

‡ Sowens, with butter instead of milk to them, is always the Halloween Supper.—*R. B.*

poet has selected, as the scene of those old customs and superstitious ceremonies, not the locality of his riper years, but that of his infancy and boyhood. Both in Alloway and at Mount Oliphant, he lived in the close neighbourhood of Colean and Cassilis Downans. We regard this selection on the poet's part as a kind of tacit hint, that even in his own time, the Halloween observances were falling out of practice in the more inhabited districts of Ayrshire. Throughout Scotland at the present day, the only vestige of these is found in the nursery-rhymes and by-plays of children, which the annual recurrence of the season wakens up.

In the sixteenth stanza, the mention of a place is introduced, which the poet names "Achmacalla." We believe there is no such locality in Carrick, or even in Ayrshire; the rhyme required it, and the name was coined accordingly. The fourth stanza from the close of the poem is generally quoted as the finest descriptive passage, within small compass, to be found in poesy. Respecting this production, Mr Lockhart says,—"Hallowe'en, a descriptive poem, perhaps even more exquisitely wrought than the 'Holy Fair,' and containing nothing that could offend the feelings of anybody, was produced about the same period. Burns' art had now reached its climax."]

TO A MOUSE,

ON TURNING HER UP IN HER NEST WITH THE PLOUGH,
NOVEMBER 1785.
(KILMARNOCK ED., 1786.)

15

WEE, sleeket, cowrin, tim'rous beastie,
O, what a panic's in thy breastie!
Thou need na start awa sae hasty,
Wi' bickerin[a] brattle![b]
I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee,
Wi' murderin' pattle![c]

I'm truly sorry man's dominion,
Has broken nature's social union,
An' justifies that ill opinion,
Which makes thee startle
At me, thy poor, earth-born companion,
An' fellow-mortal!

---

[a] speedy. [b] scamper. [c] a hand-stick to break clods.

I doubt na, whyles,[d] but thou may thieve ;
What then ? poor beastie, thou maun live !
A daimen[e] icker[f] in a thrave[g]
'S a sma' request ;
I'll get a blessin wi' the lave,[h]
An' never miss't !

Thy wee bit housie, too, in ruin !
It's silly wa's the win's are strewin !
An' naething, now, to big[i] a new ane,
O' foggage green !
An' bleak December's winds ensuin,
Baith snell[j] an' keen !

Thou saw the fields laid bare an' waste,
An' weary winter comin fast,
An' cozie here, beneath the blast,
Thou thought to dwell—
Till crash ! the cruel coulter past
Out thro' thy cell.

That wee bit heap o' leaves an' stibble,
Has cost thee mony a weary nibble !
Now thou's turn'd out, for a' thy trouble,
But[k] house or hald,[l]
To thole[m] the winter's sleety dribble,
An' cranreuch[n] cauld !

But Mousie, thou art no thy lane,
In proving foresight may be vain ;

---

[d] sometimes. [e] occasional. [f] ear of corn. [g] twenty-four sheaves.
[h] remainder. [i] build. [j] biting. [k] without
[l] holding. [m] suffer. [n] crisp hoar-frost.

The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men
Gang aft agley,°
An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain,
For promis'd joy !

Still thou art blest, compar'd wi' me !
The present only toucheth thee :
But och ! I backward cast my e'e,
On prospects drear !
An' forward, tho' I canna see,
I guess an' fear !

[We have no variations to note here. The poem seems to have issued perfect from the mint of the author's mind, when he suddenly stopped the ploughshare's farther progress on observing the tiny creature escape across the rig. This is generally regarded as one of the most faultless of the author's productions, and unmatched even by the "Mountain Daisy" in originality and interest. True, one critic is disposed to see an element of weakness in the structure of the second stanza. We are not sensible of this, and neither was William Wordsworth, whose style it closely resembles ; but oh, how unlike the work of any other poet are all the rest of the verses ! "It is difficult to decide (writes Currie) whether this 'Address' should be considered as serious or comic. If we smile at the 'bickering brattle' of this little flying animal, it is a smile of tenderness and pity. The descriptive part is admirable ; the moral reflections beautiful, arising directly out of the occasion ; and in the conclusion there is a deep melancholy, a sentiment of doubt and dread that rises to the sublime."]

EPITAPH ON JOHN DOVE, INNKEEPER.

(Stewart and Meikle's Tracts, 1799.)

Here lies Johnie Pigeon ;
What was his religion
Whaever desires to ken,
To some other warl'
Maun follow the carl,
For here Johnie Pigeon had nane !

° awry.

Strong ale was ablution—
Small beer—persecution,
A dram was "*memento mori*;"
But a full-flowing bowl
Was the saving his soul,[1]
And port was celestial glory.

[The only variation to be noted here is in the last line but one: Chambers has (1) "the joy of his soul;" but the change is no improvement, whatever was his authority for it. John Dove, or more familiarly, "Johnie Doo" was mine host of the Whitefoord Arms Inn at Mauchline, in the main street, opposite the church, at the corner of a cross street, named Cowgate. If we mistake not, he was the "Paisley John" of another poem by Burns, which would indicate that he originally hailed from that town. We have Gilbert Burns' authority for believing that the poet never frequented public houses till he had almost formed the resolution to become an author. Certain it is, before the close of the year 1785, Burns was the leading member of a bachelor's club of a very odd character which held stated meetings at the "Whitefoord Arms." It was a kind of secret association, the professed object of which was to search out, report, and discuss the merits and demerits of the many scandals that cropped up from time to time in the village. The poet was made perpetual president; John Richmond, a clerk with Gavin Hamilton, writer, was appointed "Clerk of Court"—for they dignified the mock solemnity of their meetings by adopting judicial styles and forms;—James Smith, a draper in the village, was named "procurator fiscal," and to William Hunter, shoemaker—"weel skill'd in dead and living leather"—was assigned the office of "messenger-at-arms." Having premised thus much concerning this club of rare fellows, some of its effects on Burns' musings we shall now proceed to give.]

EPITAPH FOR JAMES SMITH.

(STEWART, 1801.)

LAMENT him, Mauchline husbands a',
He aften did assist ye;
For had ye staid hale weeks awa,
Your wives they ne'er had miss'd ye.

Ye Mauchline bairns, as on ye press
To school in bands thegither,
O tread ye lightly on his grass,—
Perhaps he was your father!

[In the above lampoon upon "fiscal Smith," and libel on the matrons of Mauchline, we see the nature of the "cases" that were usually brought before the solemn "Court" assembled in the Whitefoord Arms. The poet, in his fine "Epistle to J. S.," describes his friend as of "scrimpet stature," but of manly configuration and character.]

ADAM ARMOUR'S PRAYER.

(Hogg and Motherwell's Ed., 1834.)

Gude pity me, because I'm little!
For though I am an elf o' mettle,
An' can, like ony wabster's[a] shuttle,
Jink there or here,
Yet, scarce as lang's a gude kail-whittle,[b]
I'm unco[c] queer.

An' now Thou kens our woefu' case;
For Geordie's "jurr"[d] we're in disgrace,
Because we "stang'd"* her through the place,
An' hurt her spleuchan;[e]
For whilk we daurna show our face
Within the clachan.[f]

---

[a] weaver's. [b] cabbage-knife. [c] uncommon.
[d] a journeyman, or journeywoman. [e] a purse of animal's skin.
[f] village.

---

* "Riding the stang" was a kind of lynch law, executed against obnoxious persons, by carrying them shoulder-high through the village astride a rantle-tree.

An' now we're dernd[g] in dens and hollows,
And hunted, as was William Wallace,
Wi' constables—thae blackguard fallows,
An' sodgers baith;
But Gude preserve us frae the gallows,
That shamefu' death!

Auld grim black-bearded Geordie's sel'—
O shake him owre the mouth o' hell!
There let him hing, an' roar, an' yell
Wi' hideous din,
And if he offers to rebel,
Then heave him in.

When Death comes in wi' glimmerin blink,
An' tips auld drucken Nanse* the wink,
May Sautan gie her doup a clink
Within his yett,
An' fill her up wi' brimstone drink,
Red-reekin het.

Though Jock an' hav'rel[h] Jean† are merry—
Some devil seize them in a hurry,
An' waft them in th' infernal wherry
Straught through the lake,
An' gie their hides a noble curry
Wi' oil of aik![i]

As for the "jurr"—puir worthless body!
She's got mischief enough already;

---

[g] concealed. [h] silly. [i] an oaken stick.

---

* Geordie's wife. † Geordie's son and daughter.

Wi' stanget hips, and buttocks bluidy,
She's suffer'd sair ;
But, may she wintle in a woody,[j]
If she wh—e mair !

[This very free production was first printed in the Edinburgh Magazine of January 1808. Although the poem may not be entitled to rank with the author's higher efforts in the same style, yet few readers will be inclined to dispute that it fairly establishes its own paternity. It is certainly one of a group of hasty comic effusions dashed off by Burns at this period in connection with the Whitefoord Arms conventions already spoken of. The parents of Jean Armour lived at the back of the Inn ; but her namesake who is the subject of the present poem was in no way related to her. The "Geordie" of the piece was another Mauchline innkeeper, whose "jurr," or female servant, had committed some sexual error that caused a kind of "hue and cry" against her among the neighbours. Thus encouraged, a band of reckless young fellows, with Adam Armour for a ringleader, "rade the stang" upon the poor sinner. Geordie, who sympathised with his "jurr," resented this lawless outrage, and got criminal proceedings raised against the perpetrators. Adam Armour, who was an ill-made little fellow of some determination, had to abscond, and during his wanderings he happened to fall in with Burns, who after commiserating the little outlaw, conceived the "Prayer" here put into his lips.]

THE COURT OF EQUITY.

(Unpublished Poem.)

[About this period should be introduced (had it been presentable) a remarkable production generally known under a coarser title, of which one or more autograph copies are preserved in the British Museum. These are catalogued as "Two Humorous Citations or Summonses to some of his Friends upon the Affairs of Love," &c., dated "Mauchline, 12th May 1786."

Various copies of that curious effusion of Burns shew different dates. We have, at page 163, described the nature of the club, out of whose proceedings the production emanated. John Richmond, named in the body of the poem as "Clerk of Court," left Mauchline to reside in Edinburgh about Martinmas 1785 ; so we must infer that the composition now referred to existed prior to that date. The name of John Richmond is also identified with the history of the famous piece we next present.]

---

[j] spin round on the gallows.

THE JOLLY BEGGARS.—A CANTATA.

(STEWART AND MEIKLE'S TRACTS, 1799.)

Recitativo.

WHEN lyart[a] leaves bestrow the yird,[b]
Or wavering like the bauckie-bird,*
Bedim cauld Boreas' blast;
When hailstanes drive wi' bitter skyte,[c]
And infant frosts begin to bite,
In hoary cranreuch[d] drest;
Ae night at e'en a merry core
O' randie,[e] gangrel[f] bodies,
In Poosie-Nansie's held the splore,[g]
To drink their orra duddies:[h]
Wi' quaffing and laughing,
They ranted an' they sang,
Wi' jumping an' thumping,
The vera girdle[i] rang.

First, niest the fire, in auld red rags,
Ane sat, weel brac'd wi' mealy bags,
And knapsack a' in order;
His doxy lay within his arm;
Wi' usquebae[j] an' blankets warm
She blinket on her sodger:
An' ay he gies the tozie[k] drab
The tither skelpin[l] kiss,

---

[a] withered. [b] ground. [c] slanting stroke. [d] crisp-rime. [e] regardless.
[f] vagrant. [g] spree. [h] superfluous rags. [i] circular plate of iron for baking.
[j] whisky. [k] muddled. [l] noisy.

---

* The old Scotch name for the Bat.—*R. B.*

While she held up her greedy gab,
Just like an aumous dish : *
Ilk smack still did crack still,
Just like a cadger's[m] whip ;
Then staggering an' swaggering,
He roar'd this ditty up—

Air.

Tune.—"Soldier's Joy."

I am a son of Mars who have been in many wars,
And show my cuts and scars wherever I come ;
This here was for a wench, and that other in a trench,
When welcoming the French at the sound of the drum.
Lal de daudle, &c.

My prenticeship I past where my leader breath'd his last,
When the bloody die was cast on the heights of Abram :†
And I servèd out my trade when the gallant game was play'd,
And the Moro‡ low was laid at the sound of the drum.

I lastly was with Curtis among the floating batt'ries,§
And there I left for witness an arm and a limb ;
Yet let my country need me, with Elliot‖ to head me,
I'd clatter on my stumps at the sound of a drum.

---

[m] a travelling hawker, whose wares were carried by a donkey and creels.

---

* The poet has the irreverence to compare her mouth to a beggar's alms-dish.

† The battle-ground in front of Quebec, where Wolfe victoriously fell in September 1759.

‡ El Moro was the castle that defended the harbour of St Iago.

§ At the siege of Gibraltar in 1782.

‖ G. A. Elliot (Lord Heathfield), who defended Gibraltar during three years.

And now tho' I must beg, with a wooden arm and leg,
And many a tatter'd rag hanging over my bum,
I'm as happy with my wallet, my bottle and my callet,[n]
As when I used in scarlet to follow a drum.

What tho', with hoary locks, I must stand the winter shocks,
Beneath the woods and rocks, oftentimes for a home,
When the tother bag I sell, and the tother bottle tell,
I could meet a troop of hell, at the sound of a drum.

Recitativo.

He ended; and the kebars[o] sheuk,
Aboon the chorus roar;
While frighted rattons[p] backward leuk,
An' seek the benmost bore:[q]
A fairy fiddler frae the neuk,[r]
He skirl'd out, encore!
But up arose the martial chuck,
An' laid the loud uproar.

Air.

Tune.—"Sodger Laddie."

I once was a maid, tho' I cannot tell when,
And still my delight is in proper young men:
Some one of a troop of dragoons was my daddie,
No wonder I'm fond of a sodger laddie.
Sing, lal de dal, &c.

The first of my loves was a swaggering blade,
To rattle the thundering drum was his trade;
His leg was so tight, and his cheek was so ruddy,
Transported I was with my sodger laddie.

---

[n] trull. [o] rafters. [p] rats. [q] innermost hole. [r] corner.

But the godly old chaplain left him in the lurch ;
The sword I forsook for the sake of the church :
He ventur'd the soul, and I risket the body,
'Twas then I prov'd false to my sodger laddie.

Full soon I grew sick of my sanctified sot,
The regiment at large for a husband I got ;
From the gilded spontoon to the fife I was ready,
I askèd no more but a sodger laddie.

But the peace it reduc'd me to beg in despair,
Till I met my old boy in a Cunningham fair ;
His rags regimental they flutter'd so gaudy,
My heart it rejoic'd at a sodger laddie.

And now I have liv'd—I know not how long,
And still I can join in a cup and a song ;
But whilst with both hands I can hold the glass steady,
Here's to thee, my hero, my sodger laddie.

Recitativo.

12, 6. [Poor Merry-Andrew, in the neuk,
Sat guzzling wi' a tinkler-hizzie ;[s]
They mind't na wha the chorus teuk,
Between themselves they were sae busy :
At length, wi' drink an' courting dizzy,
He stoiter'd up an' made a face ;
Then turn'd, an' laid a smack[t] on Grizzie,
Syne tun'd his pipes wi' grave grimace.

Air.

Tune—"Auld Sir Symon."

8, 6 Sir Wisdom's a fool when he's fou ;
Sir Knave is a fool in a session ;[u]

[s] slut. [t] kiss. [u] when tried criminally.

He's there but a prentice I trow,
But I am a fool by profession.

My grannie she bought me a beuk,
An' I held awa to the school;
I fear I my talent misteuk,
But what will ye hae of a fool?

For drink I would venture my neck;
A hizzie's[v] the half of my craft;
But what could ye other expect,
Of ane that's avowedly daft?

I ance was tyed up like a stirk,[w]
For civilly swearing and quaffing;
I ance was abus'd i' the kirk,
For towsing[x] a lass i' my daffin.[y]

Poor Andrew that tumbles for sport,
Let naebody name wi' a jeer;
There's even, I'm tauld, i' the Court
A tumbler ca'd the Premier.

Observ'd ye yon reverend lad
Mak faces to tickle the mob;
He rails at our mountebank squad,—
It's rivalship just i' the job.

And now my conclusion I'll tell,
For faith I'm confoundedly dry;
The chiel that's a fool for himsel,
Guid L—d! he's far dafter than I.]

---

[v] loose woman. [w] bullock: this means the punishment of the "Jougs," an iron collar padlocked round a culprit's neck in a public thoroughfare.
[x] rumpling. [y] fun.

10, b.

Recitativo.

Then niest outspak a raucle carlin,[z]
Wha kent fu' weel to cleek[a] the sterlin ;
For mony a pursie she had hooked,
An' had in mony a well been douked :
Her love had been a Highland laddie,
But weary fa' the waefu' woodie ;[b]
Wi' sighs an' sobs she thus began
To wail her braw John Highlandman.

Air.

Tune—"O an ye were dead, Guidman."

10, b.

A Highland lad my love was born,
The lalland laws he held in scorn ;
But he still was faithfu' to his clan,
My gallant, braw John Highlandman.

Chorus.

Sing hey my braw John Highlandman !
Sing ho my braw John Highlandman !
There's not a lad in a' the lan'
Was match for my John Highlandman.

With his philibeg[c] an' tartan plaid,
An' guid claymore[d] down by his side,
The ladies' hearts he did trepan,
My gallant, braw John Highlandman.
Sing hey, &c.

We rangèd a' from Tweed to Spey,
An' liv'd like lords an' ladies gay ;
For a lalland face he fearèd none,—
My gallant, braw John Highlandman.
Sing hey, &c,

---

[z] a tough old woman. [a] steal with crooked finger. [b] gallows.
[c] kilt. [d] broadsword.

They banish'd him beyond the sea,
But ere the bud was on the tree,
Adown my cheeks the pearls ran,
Embracing my John Highlandman.
Sing hey, &c.

But, och! they catch'd him at the last,
And bound him in a dungeon fast:
My curse upon them every one,
They've hang'd my braw John Highlandman!
Sing hey &c.

And now a widow I must mourn
The pleasures that will ne'er return;
No comfort but a hearty can,
When I think on John Highlandman.
Sing hey &c.

Recitativo.

A pigmy scraper wi' his fiddle,
Wha us'd at trystes an' fairs to driddle,[e]
Her strappin[f] limb and gausy[g] middle
(He reach'd nae higher)
Had hol'd his heartie like a riddle,
An' blawn't on fire.

Wi' hand on hainch, and upward e'e,
He croon'd his gamut, one, two, three,
Then in an arioso key,
The wee Apollo
Set off wi' allegretto glee
His giga solo.

---

[e] perform. [f] powerful. [g] buxom.

Air.

Tune—"Whistle owre the lave o't."

Let me ryke[h] up to dight[i] that tear,
An' go wi' me an' be my dear;
An' then your every care an' fear
May whistle owre the lave[j] o't.

Chorus.

I am a fiddler to my trade,
An' a' the tunes that e'er I play'd,
The sweetest still to wife or maid,
Was whistle owre the lave o't.

At kirns an' weddins we'se be there,
An' O sae nicely's we will fare!
We'll bowse about till Daddie Care
Sing whistle owre the lave o't.
I am, &c.

Sae merrily's the banes we'll pyke,
An' sun oursells about the dyke;
An' at our leisure, when ye like,
We'll whistle owre the lave o't.
I am, &c.

But bless me wi' your heav'n o' charms,
An' while I kittle hair on thairms,[kk]
Hunger, cauld, an' a' sic harms,
May whistle owre the love o't.
I am, &c.

---

[h] reach. [i] wipe. [j] rest. [k] horse-hair of the bow on catgut.

Recitativo.

Her charms had struck a sturdy caird,
As weel as poor gut-scraper ;
He taks the fiddler by the beard,
An' draws a roosty rapier—
He swoor by a' was swearing worth,
To speet him like a pliver,[1]
Unless he would from that time forth
Relinquish her for ever.

Wi' ghastly e'e, poor tweedle-dee
Upon his hunkers bended,
An' pray'd for grace wi' ruefu' face,
An' so the quarrel ended.
But tho' his little heart did grieve
When round the tinkler prest her,
He feign'd to snirtle[m] in his sleeve,
When thus the caird address'd her :

Air.

Tune.—"Clout the Cauldron."

My bonie lass, I work in brass,
A tinkler is my station ;
I've travell'd round all Christian ground
In this my occupation ;
I've taen the gold, an' been enrolled
In many a noble squadron ;
But vain they search'd when off I march'd
To go an' clout[n] the cauldron.
I've taen the gold, &c.

---

[1] plover for roasting. [m] laugh in derision. [n] mend.

Despise that shrimp, that wither'd imp,
With a' his noise an' cap'rin;
An' take a share with those that bear
The budget[o] and the apron!
And *by* that stowp! my faith an' houpe,
And *by* that dear Kilbaigie,*
If e'er ye want, or meet wi' scant,
May I ne'er weet my craigie.[2]
And by that stowp, &c.

Recitativo.

The caird prevail'd—th' unblushing fair
In his embraces sunk;
Partly wi' love o'ercome sae sair,
An' partly she was drunk:
Sir Violino, with an air
That show'd a man o' spunk,[3]
Wish'd unison between the pair,
An' made the bottle clunk
To their health that night.

But hurchin Cupid shot a shaft,
That play'd a dame a shavie[p]—
The fiddler rak'd her, fore and aft,
Behint the chicken cavie.[4]
Her lord, a wight of Homer's craft,†
Tho' limpin wi' the spavie,
He hirpl'd up, an' lap like daft,
An' shor'd[q] them *Dainty Davie*[r]
O' boot[s] that night.

---

[o] bag of tools. [p] clean trick. [q] promised.
[r] the song so called. [s] into the bargain.

---

* A peculiar sort of whisky so called, a great favourite with Poosie Nansie's clubs.—*R. B.* So named from Kilbaigie distillery, in Clackmannan.

† Homer is allowed to be the oldest ballad-singer on record.– *R. B.*

He was a care-defying blade
As ever Bacchus listed!
Tho' Fortune sair upon him laid,
His heart, she ever miss'd it.
He had no wish but—to be glad,
Nor want but—when he thristed;
He hated nought but—to be sad,
An' thus the muse suggested
His sang that night.

Air.

Tune.—"For a' that, an' a' that."

I am a Bard of no regard,
Wi' gentle folks an' a' that;
But Homer-like, the glowrin byke,[t]
Frae town to town I draw that.

Chorus.

For a' that an' a' that,
An' twice as muckle's a' that;
I've lost but ane, I've twa behin',
I've wife eneugh for a' that.

I never drank the Muses' stank,[u]
Castalia's burn, an' a' that;
But there it streams an' richly reams,
My Helicon I ca' that.
For a' that, &c.

Great love I bear to a' the fair,
Their humble slave an' a' that;
But lordly will, I hold it still
A mortal sin to thraw that.
For a' that, &c.

---

[t] staring throng. [u] fountain or pool.

In raptures sweet, this hour we meet,
Wi' mutual love an' a' that;
But for how lang the flie may stang,
Let inclination law that.
For a' that, &c.

Their tricks an' craft hae put me daft,
They've taen me in, an' a' that;
But clear your decks, an' here's the Sex!
I like the jads for a' that.

Chorus.

For a' that an' a' that,
An' twice as muckle's a' that;
My dearest bluid, to do them guid,
They're welcome till't for a' that.

Recitativo.

23. So sung the bard—and Nansie's wa's
Shook with a thunder of applause,
Re-echo'd from each mouth!
They toom'd their pocks, they pawn'd their duds,[1]
They scarcely left to coor their fuds,[2]
To quench their lowin drouth:
Then owre again, the jovial thrang
The poet did request
To lowse his pack an' wale[v] a sang,
A ballad o' the best;
He rising, rejoicing,
Between his twa Deborahs,
Looks round him, an' found them
Impatient for the chorus.

---

[v] select.

[1] rag [2] tail

Air.

Tune.—"Jolly Mortals, fill your Glasses."

4 B.

See the smoking bowl before us,
Mark our jovial, ragged ring!
Round and round take up the chorus,
And in raptures let us sing—

Chorus.

A fig for those by law protected!
Liberty's a glorious feast!
Courts for cowards were erected,
Churches built to please the priest.

What is title, what is treasure,
What is reputation's care?
If we lead a life of pleasure,
'Tis no matter how or where!
A fig for, &c.

With the ready trick and fable,
Round we wander all the day;
And at night, in barn or stable,
Hug our doxies on the hay.
A fig for, &c.

Does the train-attended carriage
Thro' the country lighter rove?
Does the sober bed of marriage
Witness brighter scenes of love?
A fig for, &c.

Life is all a variorum,
We regard not how it goes;
Let them cant about decorum,
Who have character to lose.
A fig for, &c.

Here's to budgets, bags and wallets!
Here's to all the wandering train,
Here's our ragged brats and callets,[w]
One and all cry out, Amen!

Chorus.

A fig for those by law protected!
Liberty's a glorious feast!
Courts for cowards were erected,
Churches built to please the priest.

[That this extraordinary work of minstrel-art was composed before the close of 1785, is evident from John Richmond's account of it furnished to Robert Chambers. One night after a meeting held at John Dow's, the poet, in the company of James Smith and Richmond, ventured into a very noisy assemblage of vagrants who were making merry in a "hedge alehouse" kept by a Mrs Gibson, known by the soubriquet of "Poosie" or "Posie Nancy." After witnessing a little of the rough jollity there, the three young men left; and in the course of a few days, Burns recited a part of the poem to Richmond, who reported that, to the best of his recollection, it contained songs by a *Sweep* and by a *Sailor* which do not now appear in the finished cantata. About Martinmas 1785, Richmond removed to Edinburgh, taking with him a portion of the cantata which the poet had presented to him,—namely, that part which we have marked off with brackets.

The "Jolly Beggars" was first published in Stewart and Meikle's Tracts, 1799, without the portion which had thus been given to Richmond. It was republished by Thomas Stewart of Glasgow in 1801, and again in 1802, embracing the *recitativo* and song of "Merry Andrew" which had in the meantime been supplied by Richmond. The manuscript thus completed was published in fac-simile by Lumsden in 1823, with consent of Stewart who was then the owner of it. The preface to

---

[w] trulls.

that facsimile contains the following statement: "The manuscript was given by the poet himself, to Mr David Woodburn, at that time factor to Mr M'Adam of Craigengillan, and by Mr Woodburn to Mr Robert M'Limont, merchant in Glasgow, from whom it passed into the possession of Mr Smith of Greenock, who gave it to the present possessor."

The original MS. is now (1876) the property of Mr Gilbert Burns, of Knockmaroon Lodge, County Dublin, nephew of the poet, who purchased it (along with some other manuscripts) for fifty guineas. On the fly-leaf of the bound volume, is a memorandum by a daughter of Mr Stewart, residing in the Azores, stating that her father's uncle, Mr Richmond, the poet's early friend, gave Mr Stewart the MS. On another leaf is written—"This manuscript belongs to David Crichton, junior, Picton, Nova Scotia, North America. Purchased at Terceiva, one of the Azores, or Western Islands, 13th January 1845."

From the foregoing account, it would appear that, while Woodburn in 1786 obtained possession of the main poem, a small portion of it, which is really inferior in quality to the rest, seems to have been purposely omitted by the author, when he stitched up the manuscript and handed it to Woodburn. That rejected part had been given to Richmond who, in 1801, presented it to his nephew Mr Stewart, to complete the cantata which that gentleman had obtained from Mr Smith of Greenock. That this is the correct way of reconciling any apparent discrepancies in stating the pedigree of this unique manuscript, is manifest on examining the original: the long dismembered portion is written on one sheet, in a larger character, in a different tint of ink, and apparently on a different quality of paper.

It is a remarkable fact that Cromek, (who in 1810 published a copy of the Jolly Beggars from the original MS., lent by Mr Stewart for the purpose), having heard from Mr Richmond that a Sailor had originally formed one of the persons in the poet's drama, actually took upon him to introduce a Sailor, at that part of the last *recitativo* but one, where the Fiddler relieves the Bard of one of his Deborahs, thus,—

> "But hurchin Cupid shot a shaft,
> That play'd a dame a shavie;
> A Sailor raked her fore and aft," &c.

Cromek used other liberties with the text which we need not farther refer to; but the public is now for the first time put in possession of the whole history of this wonderful poem.]

SONG—FOR A' THAT.

(Johnson's Museum, 1790)

Tho' women's minds, like winter winds,
May shift, and turn, an' a' that,
The noblest breast adores them maist—
A consequence I draw that.

Chor.—For a' that an' a' that,
And twice as meikle's a' that;
The bonie lass that I loe best
She'll be my ain for a' that.

Great love I bear to a' the fair,
Their humble slave, an' a' that;
But lordly will, I hold it still
A mortal sin to thraw that.
For a' that, &c.

But there is ane aboon the lave,
Has wit, and sense, an' a' that;
A bonie lass, I like her best,
And wha a crime dare ca' that?
For a' that, &c.

In rapture sweet this hour we meet,
Wi' mutual love an' a' that,
But for how lang the flie may stang,
Let inclination law that.
For a' that, &c.

Their tricks an' craft hae put me daft,
They 've taen me in an' a' that;

But clear your decks, and—here's 'The sex!'
I like the jads for a' that.
For a' that, &c.

[This composition is an altered version of the Bard's first song in the "Jolly Beggars." The first and third stanzas here given are wanting in the other version, and the two opening stanzas of the song in the Jolly Beggars are here omitted. Verse third of the text first appeared in Pickering's ed., 1839. We shall next proceed to give what seems to have been the poet's first intention as a song for the "sturdy caird" in the same cantata, and withdrawn in favour of that already given.]

SONG—KISSIN MY KATIE.

(JOHNSON'S MUSEUM, 1790.)

Tune—"The bob o' Dumblane."

O MERRY hae I been teethin a heckle,[a]
An' merry hae I been shapin a spoon;
O merry hae I been cloutin[b] a kettle,
An' kissin my Katie when a' was done.
O a' the lang day I ca' at my hammer,
An' a' the lang day I whistle and sing;
O a' the lang night I cuddle[1] my kimmer,[c]
An' a' the lang night as happy 's a king.

Bitter in dool[d] I lickit[e] my winnins[f]
O' marrying Bess, to gie her a slave:
Blest be the hour she cool'd in her linnens,
And blythe be the bird that sings on her grave!
Come to my arms, my Katie, my Katie;
O come to my arms and kiss me again!

---

[a] Soldering fresh teeth to a flax-dresser's comb. [b] mending.
[c] companion. [d] grief. [e] eat the fruit of. [f] earnings.
[1] clasp fondly under cover

Drucken or sober, here's to thee, Katie!
An' blest be the day I did it again.

[The operations described in the first stanza, are all those of the tinker. It is supposed that this song was intended to be made use of in the "Jolly Beggars," and was afterwards thrown aside for the more suitable one put into the caird's lips—"My bonie lass, I work in brass."]

THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT.

INSCRIBED TO R. AIKEN, ESQ.

(KILMARNOCK, ED., 1786.)

"Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear, with a disdainful smile,
The short and simple annals of the poor."

GRAY.

My lov'd, my honor'd, much respected friend!
No mercenary bard his homage pays;
With honest pride, I scorn each selfish end,
My dearest meed, a friend's esteem and praise:
To you I sing, in simple Scottish lays,
The lowly train in life's sequester'd scene;
The native feelings strong, the guileless ways;
What Aiken in a cottage would have been;
Ah! tho' his worth unknown, far happier there I ween!

November chill blaws loud wi' angry sugh;[a]
The short'ning winter-day is near a close;
The miry beasts retreating frae the pleugh;
The black'ning trains[1] o' craws to their repose:
The toil-worn Cotter frae his labor goes,—

---

[a] whistling sound.

This night his weekly moil is at an end,
Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,
Hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend,
And weary, o'er the moor, his course does hameward bend.

At length his lonely cot appears in view,
Beneath the shelter of an aged tree;
Th' expectant wee-things, toddlin, stacher [b] through
To meet their 'dad,' wi' flichterin' [c] noise and glee.
His wee bit ingle, blinkin bonilie,
His clean hearth-stane, his thrifty wifie's smile,
The lisping infant, prattling on his knee,
Does [2] a' his weary kiaugh [d] and care [3] beguile,
And makes him quite forget his labor and his toil.

Belyve,[e] the elder bairns come drapping in,
At service out, amang the farmers roun';
Some ca' the pleugh, some herd, some tentie [f] rin
A cannie [g] errand to a neibor town:
Their eldest hope, their Jenny, woman-grown,
In youthfu' bloom—love sparkling in her e'e—
Comes hame; perhaps, to shew a braw new gown,
Or deposite her sair-won penny-fee,
To help her parents dear, if they in hardship be.

With joy unfeign'd, brothers and sisters meet,
And each for other's welfare kindly spiers: [h]
The social [4] hours, swift-wing'd, unnotic'd fleet;
Each tells the uncos [i] that he sees or hears.
The parents partial eye their hopeful years;

---

[b] make way. [c] fluttering. [d] anxiety. [e] by-and-by.
[f] attentively. [g] private. [h] enquires. [i] uncommon news.

Anticipation forward points the view;
The mother, wi' her needle and her sheers,
Gars[j] auld claes[k] look amaist as weel's the new;
The father mixes a' wi' admonition due.

Their master's and their mistress's command,
The younkers a' are warned to obey;
And mind their labors wi' an eydent[l] hand,
And ne'er, tho' out o' sight, to jauk[m] or play;
"And O! be sure to fear the Lord alway,
And mind your duty, duly, morn and night;
Lest in temptation's path ye gang astray,
Implore His counsel and assisting might:
They never sought in vain that sought the Lord aright."

But hark! a rap comes gently to the door;
Jenny, wha kens the meaning o' the same,
Tells how a neibor lad came o'er the moor,
To do some errands, and convoy her hame.
The wily mother sees the conscious flame
Sparkle in Jenny's e'e, and flush her cheek;
With heart-struck anxious care, enquires his name,
While Jenny hafflins[n] is afraid to speak;
Weel-pleas'd the mother hears, it's nae wild, worthless rake.

Wi' kindly welcome, Jenny brings him ben;
A strappin' youth, he takes the mother's eye;
Blythe Jenny sees the visit 's no ill ta'en;
The father cracks of horses, pleughs, and kye.
The youngster's artless heart o'erflows wi' joy,

---

[j] makes. [k] clothes. [l] diligent. [m] dally. [n] almost.

But blate[o] an' laithfu',[p] scarce can weel behave;
The mother, wi' a woman's wiles, can spy
What makes the youth sae bashfu' and sae grave;
Weel-pleas'd to think her bairn's respected like the lave.[q]

O happy love! where love like this[5] is found:
O heart-felt raptures! bliss beyond compare!
I've pacèd much[6] this weary, mortal round,
And sage experience bids me this declare,—
"If Heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure spare—
One cordial in this melancholy vale,
'Tis when a youthful, loving, modest pair
In other's arms, breathe out the tender tale,
Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the evening[7] gale." *

Is there, in human form, that bears a heart,
A wretch! a villain! lost to love and truth!
That can, with studied, sly, ensnaring art,
Betray sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth?
Curse on his perjur'd[8] arts! dissembling, smooth!
Are honor, virtue, conscience, all exil'd?
Is there no pity, no relenting ruth,
Points to the parents fondling o'er their child?
Then paints the ruin'd maid, and their distraction wild?

But now the supper crowns their simple board,
The halesome parritch,[r] chief of Scotia's food;
The sowpe their only hawkie[s] does afford,
That, 'yont the hallan[t] snugly chows her cood:
The dame brings forth, in complimental mood,

---

[o] bashful. [p] hesitating. [q] rest. [r] oatmeal porridge. [s] cow. [t] porch.

---

* "If anything on earth deserves the name of rapture or transport, it is the feeling of green eighteen in the company of the mistress of his heart, when she repays him with an equal return of affection."—*Common-place Book*, April 1783.

To grace the lad, her weel-hain'd[u] kebbuck,[v] fell;[w]
And aft he's prest, and aft he ca's it guid:
The frugal wifie, garrulous, will tell
How 'twas a twomond[x] auld, sin' lint was i' the bell.

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,
They, round the ingle, form a circle wide;
The sire turns o'er, with patriarchal grace,
The big ha'-bible, ance his father's pride:
His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,
His lyart haffets[y] wearing thin and bare;
Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
He wales[z] a portion with judicious care;
And "Let us worship God!" he says with solemn air.

They chant their artless notes in simple guise,
They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim;
Perhaps 'Dundee's' wild-warbling measures rise,
Or plaintive 'Martyrs,' worthy of the name;
Or noble 'Elgin' beets the heaven-ward flame,
The sweetest[9] far of Scotia's holy lays:
Compar'd with these, Italian trills are tame;
The tickl'd ears no heart-felt raptures raise;
Nae unison hae they, with our Creator's praise.

The priest-like father reads the sacred page,
How Abram was the friend of God on high;
Or, Moses bade eternal warfare wage
With Amalek's ungracious progeny;
Or, how the royal bard did groaning lie

Bible

---

[u] saved. [v] cheese. [w] pungent. [x] twelvemonth.
[y] gray side-locks. [z] selects.

Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire;
Or Job's pathetic plaint, and wailing cry;
Or rapt Isaiah's wild, seraphic fire;
Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.

Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme,
How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed;
How He, who bore in Heaven the second name,
Had not on earth whereon to lay His head:
How His first followers and servants sped;
The precepts sage they wrote to many a land:
How he, who lone in Patmos banishèd,
Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand,
And heard great Bab'lon's doom pronounc'd by Heaven's command.

Then kneeling down to Heaven's Eternal King,
The saint, the father, and the husband prays:
Hope "springs exulting on triumphant wing," *
That thus they all shall meet in future days,
There, ever bask in uncreated rays,
No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear,
Together hymning their Creator's praise,
In such society, yet still more dear;
While circling Time moves round in an eternal sphere.

Compar'd with this, how poor Religion's pride,
In all the pomp of method, and of art;
When men display to congregations wide
Devotion's ev'ry grace, except the heart!
The Power, incens'd, the pageant will desert,

---

* Pope's "Windsor Forest."—*R. B.*

The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole;
But haply, in some cottage far apart,
May hear, well-pleas'd, the language of the soul;
And in His Book of Life the inmates poor enroll.

Then homeward all take off their sev'ral way;
The youngling cottagers retire to rest:
The parent-pair their secret homage pay,
And proffer up to Heaven the warm request,
That He who stills the raven's clam'rous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flow'ry pride,
Would, in the way His wisdom sees the best,
For them and for their little ones provide;
But chiefly, in their hearts with grace divine preside.

From scenes like these, old Scotia's grandeur springs,
That makes her lov'd at home, rever'd abroad:
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,*
"An honest man's the noblest work of God;"
And certes, in fair virtue's heavenly road,
The cottage leaves the palace far behind;
What is a lordling's pomp? a cumbrous load,
Disguising oft the wretch of human kind,
Studied in arts of hell, in wickedness refin'd!

O Scotia! my dear, my native soil!
For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent,
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil
Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content!
And O! may Heaven their simple lives prevent

---

* "Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade;
A breath can make them, as a breath has made."
GOLDSMITH'S *Deserted Village.*

From luxury's contagion, weak and vile !
Then, howe'er crowns and coronets be rent,
A virtuous populace may rise the while,
And stand a wall of fire around their much-lov'd isle.

O Thou ! who pour'd the patriotic tide,
That stream'd thro' Wallace's undaunted[10] heart,
Who dar'd to, nobly, stem tyrannic pride,
Or nobly die, the second glorious part :
(The patriot's God, peculiarly thou art,
His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward !)
O never, never Scotia's realm desert ;
But still the patriot, and the patriot-bard
In bright succession raise, her ornament and guard !

[That this poem was composed near the close of 1785, is proved by the author's words in his letter to John Richmond, 17th February 1786. That young man was then a writer's clerk in Edinburgh, whither he had gone from Mauchline two or three months previously. In that letter, the titles are given of five very important poems, including "The Cottar's Saturday Night," which, "among several others," he had composed since Richmond left Mauchline. Lockhart has well said—"'The Cottar's Saturday Night' is perhaps, of all Burns' pieces, the one whose exclusion from the collection, were such things possible now-a-days, would be most injurious, if not to the genius, at least to the character of the man. In spite of many feeble lines and some heavy stanzas, it appears to me that even his genius would suffer more in estimation by being contemplated in the absence of this poem than of any other single poem he has left us."

The fact of this poem having been constructed on the model of Fergusson's "Farmer's Ingle," takes nothing from its merit, and the rapidity of its execution along with many others, while it surprises us, can be explained only by the conjecture, that almost immediately after the failure of his second year's crop at Mossgiel, he had come to the resolution of abandoning his farm, and of composing a set of poems with a view to publication.

The MS. copy of this poem, used by the printer of the Kilmarnock edition of his poems, is now at Irvine, carefully preserved by the Burns' Club there, along with several other manuscripts. A fac-simile of it was published by Mr Maxwell Dick, of that town, in 1840. An earlier copy is that which was presented to Allan Cunningham in

1834 by his publisher, Mr James Cochrane, and is now in the British Museum, London. From these sources we are enabled to record the following variations :—

[1] flocks. [2] Do. [4] tender. [5] suchen love. [6] tracèd long
[7] balmy. [8] coward. [9] chiefest.

The variations marked ([3]) and ([10]) were made by the author for his edition of 1793 : the latter originally read "great, unhappy Wallace' heart," the change having been adopted to please Mrs Dunlop. The expression "kiaugh and care" ([3]) was at the same time changed to "carking cares," to suit those who objected to the word "kiaugh" as being too antiquated. In our text, we adhere to the original words.]

ADDRESS TO THE DEIL.

(Kilmarnock Ed., 1786.)

"O Prince ! O chief of many thronèd pow'rs !
That led th' embattl'd seraphim to war—"

Milton.

O Thou ! whatever title suit thee—
Auld "Hornie," "Satan," "Nick," or "Clootie,"
Wha in yon cavern grim an' sootie,
Clos'd under hatches,
Spairges [a] about the brunstane cootie,[b]
To scaud poor wretches !

Hear me, auld "Hangie," for a wee,
An' let poor damnèd bodies be ;
I'm sure sma' pleasure it can gie,
Ev'n to a deil,
To skelp an' scaud poor dogs like me,
An' hear us squeel !

Great is thy pow'r an' great thy fame ;
Far kenn'd an' noted is thy name ;

---

[a] scatters. [b] foot-pail.

An' tho' yon lowin heugh's [c] thy hame,
Thou travels far;
An' faith! thou 's neither lag [d] nor lame,
Nor blate,[e] nor scaur.[f]

Whyles, rangin like a roarin lion,
For prey, a' holes an' corners tryin;
Whyles, on the strong-wing'd tempest flyin,
Tirlin [g] the kirks;
Whyles, in the human bosom pryin,
Unseen thou lurks.

I've heard my rev'rend grannie say,
In lanely glens ye like to stray;
Or where auld ruin'd castles grey
Nod to the moon,
Ye fright the nightly wand'rer's way,
Wi' eldritch [h] croon.

When twilight did my grannie summon,
To say her pray'rs, douse, honest woman!
Aft 'yont the dyke she's heard you bummin,
Wi' eerie [i] drone;
Or, rustlin, thro' the boortrees [j] comin,
Wi' heavy groan.

Ae dreary, windy, winter night,
The stars shot down wi' sklentin [k] light,
Wi' you mysel, I gat a fright,
Ayont the lough;
Ye, like a rash-buss, stood in sight,
Wi' wavin sough.[l]

---

[c] pit or hollow. [d] slow. [e] bashful. [f] to be scared.
[g] unroofing. [h] hideous. [i] frightful. [j] elder-trees.
[k] slanting. [l] sound.

The cudgel in my nieve[m] did shake,
Each bristl'd hair stood like a stake,
When wi' an eldritch, stoor[n] "quaick, quaick,"
Amang the springs,
Awa ye squatter'd like a drake,
On whistlin wings.

Let warlocks grim, an' wither'd hags,
Tell how wi' you, on ragweed nags,
They skim the muirs an' dizzy crags,
Wi' wicked speed;
And in kirk-yards renew their leagues,
Owre howket[o] dead.

Thence, countra wives, wi' toil an' pain,
May plunge an' plunge the kirn in vain;
For oh! the yellow treasures taen
By witchin skill;
An' dawtet,[p] twal-pint 'hawkie's'[q] gane
As yell's the bill.[r]

Thence, mystic knots mak great abuse
On young guidmen, fond, keen an' croose;
When the best wark-lume i' the house,
By cantraip[s] wit,
Is instant made no worth a louse,
Just at the bit.

When thowes dissolve the snawy hoord,
An' float the jinglin icy boord,
Then, water-kelpies haunt the foord,
By your direction,
And 'nighted trav'llers are allur'd
To their destruction.

---

[m] fist. [n] base-voiced. [o] dug-up. [p] petted. [q] cow. [r] milkless as the bull. [s] magic.

And aft your moss-traversin "Spunkies"
Decoy the wight that late an' drunk is:
The bleezin, curst, mischievous monkies
Delude his eyes,
Till in some miry slough he sunk is,
Ne'er mair to rise.

When masons' mystic word an' grip
In storms an' tempests raise you up,
Some cock or cat your rage maun stop,
Or, strange to tell!
The youngest "brither" ye wad whip
Aff straught to hell.

Lang syne in Eden's bonie yard,
When youthfu' lovers first were pair'd,
An' all the soul of love they shar'd,
The raptur'd hour—
Sweet on the fragrant flow'ry swaird,
In shady bow'r;[1]

Then you, ye auld, snick-drawin[t] dog!
Ye cam to Paradise incog,
An' play'd on man a cursed brogue,[u]
(Black be your fa'!)
An' gied the infant warld a shog,[v]
'Maist ruin'd a.'

D'ye mind that day when in a bizz[w]
Wi' reeket duds,[x] an' reestet gizz,[y]
Ye did present your smootie phiz[z]
'Mang better folk,

---

[t] who draws the bolt stealthily. [u] trick. [v] startling shake.
[w] ferment. [x] smoked rags. [y] fire-shrivelled appearance.
[z] blackened face.

Hiob

An' sklented [a] on the man of Uzz
Your spitefu' joke?

An' how ye gat him i' your thrall,
An' brak him out o' house an' hal,'
While scabs an' botches did him gall,
Wi' bitter claw;
An' lows'd his ill-tongu'd wicked scaul—[b]
Was warst ava?

Milton

But a' your doings to rehearse,
Your wily snares an' fechtin fierce,
Sin' that day Michael* did you pierce,
Down to this time,
Wad ding a Lallan tongue, or Erse,
In prose or rhyme.

An' now, auld "Cloots," I ken ye're thinkin,
A certain bardie's rantin, drinkin,
Some luckless hour will send him linkin,
To your black pit;
But, faith! he'll turn a corner jinkin,
An' cheat you yet.

But fare-you-weel, auld "Nickie-ben!"
O wad ye tak a thought an' men'!
Ye aiblins [c] might—I dinna ken—
Still hae a stake:
I'm wae to think upo' yon den,
Ev'n for your sake!

[The only variation we have to record in connection with this poem is in the seventh verse from the close, and it is a very significant one.

---

[a] sinisterly cast. [b] scolding wife. [c] perhaps.

* *Vide* Milton, Book vi.—*R.B.*

In the letter to John Richmond, of 17th Feb. 1786, already alluded to in the note to "The Cottar's Saturday Night," the poet hints at something disagreeable having happened with respect to himself. The reference there was to an occurrence which, shortly afterwards, led to a rupture between Jean Armour and him. As the present poem then stood, the verse indicated read as follows :—

"Lang syne, in Eden's happy scene
When strappin Adam's days were green,
And Eve was like my bonie Jean—
My dearest part,
A dancin, sweet, young handsome quean,
O' guileless heart."

For that stanza, the one in the text was substituted when he came to prepare the poem for the press. A similar obliteration of the name of Jean was made in the poem entitled "The Vision." He would have deleted "the adored name" from the "Epistle to Davie" also, we may be very certain, had it been possible to do so without seriously injuring it.

The poet styles Satan a "sneck-drawin dog," an epithet which our glossary explains as referring to the stealthy doings of a thief: but it signifies more than that. The allusion is rather to the practised cheat who ingeniously scrapes away from the horns of cattle the natural markings which tell their age,—by which trick he can pass them off as much younger, and of more value.

This "Address to the Deil" is one of the author's most popular pieces, and has been the theme of unmingled praise by critics. The poet's relenting tenderness, even towards the author and perpetual embodiment of evil, is a fine stroke at the close. "Humour and tenderness," says Dr Currie, "are here so happily intermixed, that it is impossible to say which predominates."]

SCOTCH DRINK.

(Kilmarnock Ed., 1786.)

Gie him strong drink until he wink,
That's sinking in despair;
An' liquor guid to fire his bluid,
That's prest wi' grief an' care:
There let him bowse, an' deep carouse,
Wi' bumpers flowing o'er,
Till he forgets his loves or debts,
An' minds his griefs no more.

Solomon's Proverbs, xxxi. 6, 7.

Let other poets raise a frácas
'Bout vines, an' wines, an' drucken Bacchus,
An' crabbet names an' stories wrack us,
An' grate our lug:[a]
I sing the juice Scotch bere[b] can mak us,
In glass or jug.

O thou, my muse! guid auld Scotch drink!
Whether thro' wimplin[c] worms thou jink,[d]
Or, richly brown, ream owre the brink,
In glorious faem,
Inspire me, till I lisp an' wink,
To sing thy name!

Let husky wheat the haughs[e] adorn,
An' aits set up their awnie[f] horn,
An' pease and beans, at e'en or morn,
Perfume the plain:
Leeze[g] me on thee, John Barleycorn,
Thou king o' grain!

---

[a] ear. [b] barley. [c] winding. [d] escape. [e] level land near a river.
[f] bearded. [g] commend me to thee!

On thee aft Scotland chows her cood,
In souple scones,[h] the wale[i] o' food!
Or tumblin in the boiling flood
Wi' kail an' beef;
But when thou pours thy strong heart's blood,
There thou shines chief.

Food fills the wame,[j] an' keeps us leevin;
Tho' life's a gift no worth receivin,
When heavy-dragg'd wi' pine an' grievin;
But oil'd by thee,
The wheels o' life gae down-hill, scrievin,[k]
Wi' rattlin glee.

Thou clears the head o' doited[l] Lear;
Thou cheers the heart o' drooping Care;
Thou strings the nerves o' Labor sair,
At 's weary toil;
Thou ev'n brightens dark Despair
Wi' gloomy smile.

Aft, clad in massy siller weed,[m]
Wi' gentles thou erects thy head;
Yet, humbly kind in time o' need,
The poor man's wine;
His wee drap parritch, or his bread,
Thou kitchens[n] fine.

Thou art the life o' public haunts;
But[o] thee, what were our fairs and rants?

---

[h] soft cakes. [i] most select. [j] stomach. [k] rapidly. [l] confused.
[m] strong ale in silver mugs. [n] gives a relish to. [o] without.

Ev'n godly meetings o' the saunts,
By thee inspir'd,
When, gaping, they besiege the tents,
Are doubly fir'd.*

That merry night we get the corn in,
O sweetly, then, thou reams the horn in!
Or reekin on a New-year mornin
In cog or bicker,[p]
An' just a wee drap sp'ritual burn in,[q]
An' gusty sucker![r]

When Vulcan gies his bellows breath,
An' ploughmen gather wi' their graith,[s]
O rare! to see thee fizz an' freath
I' th' lugget caup![t]
Then Burnewin[u] comes on like death
At ev'ry chaup.[v]

Nae mercy, then, for airn or steel;
The brawnie, bainie, ploughman chiel,
Brings hard owrehip, wi' sturdy wheel,
The strong forehammer,
Till block an' studdie ring an' reel,
Wi' dinsome clamour.

When skirlin weanies[w] see the light,
Thou maks the gossips clatter bright,

---

[p] wooden vessel. [q] ale-posset with whisky added. [r] sugar.
[s] implements. [t] an eared cup, called a "quaich". [u] the blacksmith.
[v] stroke of the hammer. [w] squalling infants.

---

* *See* "The Holy Fair."

How fumblin' cuifs[x] their dearies slight;
Wae worth the name!
Nae howdie[y] gets a social night,
Or plack[z] frae them.[1]

When neibors anger at a plea,
An' just as wud[a] as wud can be,
How easy can the barley-brie
Cement the quarrel!
It's ay¢ the cheapest lawyer's fee,
To taste the barrel.

Alake! that e'er my muse has reason,
To wyte[b] her countrymen wi' treason!
But mony daily weet their weason[c]
Wi' liquors nice,
An' hardly, in a winter season,
E'er spier[d] her price.

Wae worth that brandy, burnin trash[2]!
Fell source o' mony a pain an' brash[3]!
Twins[e] mony a poor, doylt,[f] drucken hash,[4]
O' half his days;
An' sends, beside, auld Scotland's cash
To her warst faes.

Ye Scots, wha wish auld Scotland well!
Ye chief, to you my tale I tell,
Poor, plackless[g] devils like mysel!
It sets you ill,
Wi' bitter, dearthfu' wines to mell,[h]
Or foreign gill.

---

[x] incapables. [y] midwife. [z] the smallest coin. [a] wild. [b] blame.
[c] wet their throat. [d] ask. [e] deprives.
[f] demented. [g] pennyless. [h] meddle.

May gravels round his blather wrench,
An' gouts torment him, inch by inch,
Wha twists his gruntle[i] wi' a glunch[j]
O' sour disdain,
Out owre a glass o' whisky-punch
Wi' honest men!

O whisky! soul o' plays an' pranks!
Accept a bardie's gratefu' thanks![2]
When wanting thee, what tuneless cranks
Are my poor verses!
Thou comes—they rattle i' their ranks
At ither's a—s!

Thee, Ferintosh!* O sadly lost!
Scotland lament frae coast to coast!
Now colic grips, an' barkin hoast[k]
May kill us a';
For loyal Forbes' charter'd boast
Is ta'en awa!

Thae curst horse-leeches[2] o' th' Excise,
Wha mak the whisky stells their prize!
Haud up thy han', Deil! ance, twice, thrice!
There, seize the blinkers!
An' bake them up in brunstane[3] pies
For poor d—n'd drinkers.

Fortune! if thou'll but gie me still
Hale breeks, a scone,[1] an' whisky gill,

---

[i] mouth. [j] grumble. [k] cough. [l] flour or barley cake.

---

* Whisky from a privileged distillery in Cromartyshire, belonging to Forbes of Culloden. The privilege was abolished by Parliament in 1785.

[1] Kleidung, Kleidung [2] Geschwarz [3] brimstone Schwefel

An' rowth[m] o' rhyme to rave at will,
Tak a' the rest,
An' deal't about as thy blind skill
Directs thee best.

[Gilbert Burns, in his narrative of his brother's early life, thus remarks on the subject of this poem:—"Notwithstanding the praise he has bestowed on 'Scotch Drink'—which seems to have misled his historians—I do not recollect during these seven years [the Tarbolton period] nor till towards the end of his commencing author—when his growing celebrity occasioned his being often in company—to have ever seen him intoxicated, nor was he at all given to drinking."—*Currie's Ed.*, 1801, Vol. I. p. 73.

Robert Fergusson had composed verses, in the same measure, on the subject of "Caller Water," and Burns, in search of a theme to aid in filling his contemplated volume, took up "Scotch Drink." He has not treated the topic as a temperance lecturer might have done; but the generous reader will be apt to say with Chambers that "the humane passage in verse seventh redeems much that may otherwise be objectionable in the poem."

The following variation occurs in verse 12, in the first edition:—

[1] Wae worth them for't!
While healths gae round to him wha, *tight*,
Gies famous sport.

In the edition of 1794, an alteration, in verse fourth from the close, seems to have been made by his Edinburgh reviser of the press—Mr A. F. Tytler:—

[2] "Humble thanks" for "gratefu' thanks."]

---

[m] abundance.

THE AULD FARMER'S NEW-YEAR MORNING SALUTATION TO HIS AULD MARE, MAGGIE,

On giving her the accustomed ripp of corn to hansel in the New-year.

(Kilmarnock Ed., 1786.)

A guid New-year I wish thee, Maggie!
Hae, there's a ripp [a] to thy auld baggie: [b]
Tho' thou's howe-backit [c] now, an' knaggie, [d]
I've seen the day
Thou could hae gaen like ony staggie, [e]
Out-owre the lay. [f]

Tho' now thou's dowie, [g] stiff an' crazy,
An' thy auld hide as white's a daisie,
I've seen thee dappl't, sleek an' glaizie,
A bonie gray:
He should been tight that daur't to raize [h] thee,
Ance in a day.

Thou ance was i' the foremost rank,
A filly buirdly, [i] steeve [j] an' swank; [k]
An' set weel down a shapely shank,
As e'er tread yird; [l]
An' could hae flown out-owre a stank, [m]
Like ony bird.

It's now some nine-an'-twenty year,
Sin' thou was my guid-father's meere;

---

[a] handful. [b] stomach. [c] hollow-backed. [d] bony. [e] colt.
[f] lea. [g] decayed. [h] anger. [i] strong. [j] firm.
[k] stately. [l] earth. [m] ditch or morass.

He gied me thee, o' tocher [n] clear,
An' fifty mark ;
Tho' it was sma', 'twas weel-won gear,
An' thou was stark.[o]

When first I gaed to woo my Jenny,
Ye then was trottin wi' your minnie :
Tho' ye was trickie, slee, an' funnie,
Ye ne'er was donsie ;[p]
But hamely, tawie,[q] quiet, an' cannie,
An' unco sonsie.[r]

That day, ye pranc'd wi' muckle pride,
When ye bure hame my bonie bride :
An' sweet an' gracefu' she did ride,
Wi' maiden air !
Kyle-Stewart * I could bragget wide,
For sic a pair.

Tho' now ye dow [s] but hoyte [t] and hobble,
An' wintle [u] like a saumont-coble,
That day, ye was a jinker [v] noble,
For heels an' win' !
An' ran them till they a' did wauble,[w]
Far, far behin' !

When thou an' I were young an' skiegh,[x]
An' stable-meals at fairs were driegh,[y]
How thou wad prance, an' snore, an' skriegh,
An' tak the road !
Town's-bodies ran, an' stood abiegh,[z]
An' ca't thee mad.

[n] dowry. [o] strong. [p] mischievous. [q] easy-led. [r] plump.
[s] can. [t] stumble. [u] twist and rock. [v] runner. [w] stoiter.
[x] high-mettled. [y] lingering [z] out of the way.

* See note, page 75.

'fishing-boat

When thou was corn't, an' I was mellow,
We took the road ay like a swallow:
At brooses [a] thou had ne'er a fellow,
For pith an' speed;
But ev'ry tail thou pay't them hollow,
Where'er thou gaed.

The sma', droop-rumpl't, hunter cattle
Might aiblins waur't [b] thee for a brattle;[c]
But sax Scotch mile, thou try't their mettle,
An' gar't them whaizle:
Nae whip nor spur, but just a wattle
O' saugh or hazle.

Thou was a noble 'fittie-lan',' [d]
As e'er in tug or tow was drawn!
Aft thee an' I, in aught hours' gaun,
On guid March-weather,
Hae turn'd sax rood beside our han',
For days thegither.

Thou never braing't,[e] an fetch't, an' flisket;[f]
But thy auld tail thou wad hae whisket,
An' spread abreed thy weel-fill'd brisket,[g]
Wi' pith an' power;
Till sprittie knowes [h] wad rair't an' risket,[i]
An' slypet [j] owre.

When frosts lay lang, an' snaws were deep,
An' threaten'd labour back to keep,

---

[a] wedding-races. [b] perhaps beat. [c] short-race.
[d] the near horse of the hindmost pair in ploughing. [e] fretted.
[f] raged and kicked. [g] breast. [h] knolls tough with roots.
[i] made a cracking sound. [j] fell smoothly.

I gied thy cog a wee bit heap
Aboon the timmer:
I ken'd my Maggie wad na sleep,
For that, or [k] simmer.

In cart or car thou never reestet;[l]
The steyest[m] brae thou wad hae fac't it;
Thou never lap, an' stenned,[n] an' breastet,
Then stood to blaw;
But just thy step a wee thing hastet,
Thou snoov't[o] awa.

My "pleugh"[p] is now thy bairn-time[q] a',
Four gallant brutes as e'er did draw;
Forbye sax mae I've sell't awa,
That thou hast nurst:
They drew me thretteen pund an' twa,
The vera warst.

Mony a sair daurg[r] we twa hae wrought,
An' wi' the weary warl' fought!
An' mony an anxious day, I thought
We wad be beat!
Yet here to crazy age we're brought,
Wi' something yet.

An' think na', my auld trusty servan',
That now perhaps thou's less deservin,
An' thy auld days may end in starvin;
For my last fow,[s]
A heapet stimpart,[t] I'll reserve ane
Laid by for you.

---

[k] ere. [l] stood still. [m] steepest. [n] forced. [o] paced quietly.
[p] a figure of speech here used for *the plough-team*. [q] offspring.
[r] day's-work. [s] bushel. [t] eighth part of a bushel.

' blow

We've worn to crazy years thegither;
We'll toyte [u] about wi' ane anither;
Wi' tentie care I'll flit thy tether
To some hain'd rig,[v]
Whare ye may nobly rax [w] your leather,
Wi' sma' fatigue.

[Our poet seems to have "hansel'd" the eventful year 1786 with this poem, which is executed in his very best manner. Professor Wilson, in his famed Essay on Burns, declares that, to his knowledge, the recital of it has brought tears of pleasure to the eyes, and "humanised the heart of a Gilmerton carter." There are no variations to note in connection with this composition.]

THE TWA DOGS:

A TALE.

(Kilmarnock Ed., 1786.)

'Twas in that place o' Scotland's isle,
That bears the name o' auld "King Coil," [a]
Upon a bonie day in June,
When wearin thro' the afternoon,
Twa dogs, that were na thrang at hame,
Forgather'd [b] ance upon a time.

The first I'll name, they ca'd him "Cæsar,"
Was keepet for "his Honor's" pleasure:
His hair, his size, his mouth, his lugs,
Shew'd he was nane o' Scotland's dogs;
But whalpet some place far abroad,
Whare sailors gang to fish for cod.

His lockèd, letter'd, braw brass collar
Shew'd him the gentleman an' scholar;

---

[u] move. [v] reserved bit of ground. [w] stretch.
[a] the district of King's Kyle in Ayrshire. [b] met together.

But though he was o' high degree,
The fient a pride, nae pride had he;
But wad hae spent an hour caressin,
Ev'n wi' a tinkler-gipsey's messan:[c]
At kirk or market, mill or smiddie,
Nae tawted tyke,[d] tho' e'er sae duddie,
But he wad stand, as glad to see him,
An' stroan'd on stanes an' hillocks wi' him.

The tither was a ploughman's collie—
A rhyming, ranting, raving billie,[e]
Wha for his friend an' comrade had him,
And in his freaks had "Luath" ca'd him,
After some dog in Highland sang,*
Was made lang syne—Lord knows how lang.

He was a gash[f] an' faithfu' tyke,
As ever lap a sheugh[g] or dyke.
His honest, sonsie, baws'nt[h] face
Ay gat him friends in ilka place;
His breast was white, his tousie[i] back
Weel clad wi' coat o' glossy black;
His gawsie[j] tail, wi' upward curl,
Hung owre his hurdies[k] wi' a swirl.

Nae doubt but they were fain[l] o' ither,
And unco pack an' thick[m] thegither;
Wi' social nose whyles snuff'd an' snowket;
Whyles mice an' moudieworts[n] they howket;[o]
Whyles scour'd[p] awa' in lang excursion,
An' worry'd ither in diversion;
Till tir'd at last wi' mony a farce,
They set them down upon their arse,[1]

[c] mongrel cur. [d] rough cur. [e] brother. [f] sagacious. [g] ditch.
[h] striped with white. [i] shaggy. [j] large. [k] hips. [l] fond.
[m] hob-a-nob. [n] moles. [o] dug up. [p] scampered.

* Cuchullin's dog in Ossian's "Fingal."—*R. B.*

An' there began a lang digression
About the "lords o' the creation."

CÆSAR.

I've aften wonder'd, honest Luath,
What sort o' life poor dogs like you have;
An' when the gentry's life I saw,
What way poor bodies liv'd ava.
Our laird gets in his rackèd rents,
His coals, his kane,[q] an' a' his stents:[r]
He rises when he likes himsel;
His flunkies answer at the bell;
He ca's his coach; he ca's his horse;
He draws a bonie silken purse,
As lang's my tail, whare, thro' the steeks,
The yellow letter'd Geordie keeks.
Frae morn to e'en it's nought but toiling,
At baking, roasting, frying, boiling;
An' tho' the gentry first are stechin,[s]
Yet ev'n the ha' folk[t] fill their pechan[u]
Wi' sauce, ragouts, an' sic like trashtrie,
That's little short o' downright wastrie.[1]
Our whipper-in, wee, blastet wonner,[v]
Poor, worthless elf, it eats a dinner,
Better than ony tenant-man
His Honor has in a' the lan':
An' what poor cot-folk pit their painch[w] in,
I own it's past my comprehension.

LUATH.

Trowth, Cæsar, whyles they're fash't[x] eneugh:
A cotter howkin in a sheugh,[y]

---

[q] rents in farm-produce. [r] assessments. [s] cramming. [t] kitchen-people.
[u] belly. [v] despised indweller. [w] stomach. [x] perplexed. [y] ditch.
[1] prodigality

Wi' dirty stanes biggin a dyke,
Baring [z] a quarry, an' sic like;
Himsel, a wife, he thus sustains,
A smytrie [a] o' wee duddie weans,
An' nought but his han'-daurg,[b] to keep
Them right an' tight in thack an' raep.[c]
An' when they meet wi' sair disasters,
Like loss o' health or want o' masters,
Ye maist wad think, a wee touch langer,
An' they maun starve o' cauld and hunger:
But how it comes, I never kent yet,
They're maistly wonderfu' contented
An' buirdly [d] chiels, an' clever hizzies,[e]
Are bred in sic a way as this is.

CÆSAR.

But then to see how ye're neglecket,
How huff'd, an' cuff'd, an' disrespecket!
L—d man, our gentry care as little
For delvers, ditchers, an' sic cattle;
They gang as saucy by poor folk,
As I wad by a stinking brock.[f]
I've notic'd, on our laird's court-day,—
An' mony a time my heart's been wae,—
Poor tenant bodies, scant o' cash,
How they maun thole [g] a factor's snash; [h]
He'll stamp an' threaten, curse an' swear
He'll apprehend them, poind [i] their gear;
While they maun stan', wi' aspect humble,
An' hear it a', an' fear an' tremble!

---

[z] clearing away the debris from the rock. [a] litter. [b] hand's labour.
[c] "thack and raep," meaning thatch and straw-rope to bind it, is a symbolic term for "household." [d] stately. [e] women. [f] badger.
[g] endure. [h] outburst of spite. [i] judicially attach.

I see how folk live that hae riches;
But surely poor-folk maun be wretches!

LUATH.

They're no sae wretched 's ane wad think.
Tho' constantly on poortith's brink,
They're sae accustom'd wi' the sight,
The view o't gies them little fright.
Then chance and fortune are sae guided,
They're ay in less or mair provided;
An' tho' fatigu'd wi' close employment,
A blink o' rest's a sweet enjoyment.
The dearest comfort o' their lives,
Their grushie[j] weans an' faithfu' wives;
The prattling things are just their pride,
That sweetens a' their fire-side.
An' whyles twalpennie worth o' nappy[k]
Can mak the bodies unco happy:
They lay aside their private cares,
To mind the Kirk and State affairs;
They'll talk o' patronage an' priests,
Wi' kindling fury i' their breasts,
Or tell what new taxation's comin,
An' ferlie[l] at the folk in Lon'on.
As bleak-fac'd Hallowmass returns,
They get the jovial, rantin kirns,[m]
When rural life, of ev'ry station,
Unite in common recreation;
Love blinks, Wit slaps, an' social Mirth
Forgets there's Care upo' the earth.
That merry day the year begins,
They bar the door on frosty win's;

---

[j] thriving. [k] ale. [l] marvel. [m] harvest-home rejoicings.

The nappy reeks wi' mantling ream,
An' sheds a heart-inspiring steam;
The luntin pipe, an' sneeshin mill,[n]
Are handed round wi' right guid will;
The cantie auld folks crackin crouse,[o]
The young anes ranting thro' the house—
My heart has been sae fain to see them,
That I for joy hae barket wi' them.
Still it's owre true that ye hae said
Sic game is now owre aften play'd;
There's mony a creditable stock
O' decent, honest, fawsont[p] folk,
Are riven out baith root an' branch,
Some rascal's pridefu' greed to quench,
Wha thinks to knit himsel the faster
In favor wi' some gentle master,
Wha, aiblins thrang a parliamentin',
For Britain's guid his saul indentin'—

CÆSAR.

Haith, lad, ye little ken about it:
For Britain's guid! guid faith! I doubt it.
Say rather, gaun as Premiers lead him:
An' saying aye or no 's they bid him:
At operas an' plays parading,
Mortgaging, gambling, masquerading:
Or maybe, in a frolic daft,
To Hague or Calais takes a waft,
To mak a tour an' tak a whirl,
To learn *bon ton*, an' see the worl'.
There, at Vienna or Versailles,
He rives his father's auld entails;

---

[n] snuff-mull. [o] conversing gleefully. [p] seemly.

Or by Madrid he takes the rout,
To thrum guitars an' fecht wi' nowt;
Or down Italian vista startles,
Wh–re-hunting amang groves o' myrtles:
Then bowses drumlie German-water,
To mak himsel look fair an' fatter,
An' clear the consequential sorrows,[2]
Love-gifts of Carnival signoras.
For Britain's guid! for her destruction!
Wi' dissipation, feud an' faction.

LUATH.

Hech man! dear sirs! is that the gate
They waste sae mony a braw estate!
Are we sae foughten an' harass'd
For gear to gang that gate at last?
O would they stay aback frae courts,
An' please themsels wi' countra sports,
It wad for ev'ry ane be better,
The laird, the tenant, an' the cotter!
For thae frank, rantin', ramblin' billies,
Fient haet o' them's ill-hearted fellows;
Except for breakin o' their timmer,
Or speakin lightly o' their limmer,
Or shootin of a hare or moor-cock,
The ne'er-a-bit they're ill to poor folk.
But will ye tell me, master Cæsar,
Sure great folk's life 's a life o' pleasure?
Nae cauld nor hunger e'er can steer them,
The vera thought o't need na fear them.

CÆSAR.

L—d, man, were ye but whyles whare I am,
The gentles, ye wad ne'er envy them!

[2] trumpet

It's true, they need na starve or sweat,
Thro' winter's cauld, or simmer's heat;
They've nae sair-wark to craze their banes,
An' fill auld-age wi' grips an' granes!
But human bodies are sic fools,
For a' their colleges an' schools,
That when nae real ills perplex them,
They mak enow themsels to vex them;
An' ay the less they hae to sturt[q] them,
In like proportion, less will hurt them.

A country fellow at the pleugh,
His acre's till'd, he's right eneugh;
A country girl at her wheel,
Her dizzen's done, she's unco weel;
But gentlemen, an' ladies warst,
Wi' ev'n-down want o' wark are curst.
They loiter, lounging, lank an' lazy;
Tho' deil-haet ails them, yet uneasy:
Their days insipid, dull an' tasteless;
Their nights unquiet, lang an' restless.

An' ev'n their sports, their balls an' races,
Their galloping through public places,
There's sic parade, sic pomp an' art,
The joy can scarcely reach the heart.

The men cast out in party-matches,
Then sowther a' in deep debauches.
Ae night they're mad wi' drink an' wh–ring,
Niest day their life is past enduring.

The ladies arm-in-arm in clusters,
As great an' gracious a' as sisters;
But hear their absent thoughts o' ither,
They're a' run deils an' jads thegither.

---

[q] molest.

'groan

Whyles, owre the wee bit cup an' platie,
They sip the scandal-potion pretty;
Or lee-lang nights, wi' crabbet leuks
Pore owre the devil's pictur'd beuks;
Stake on a chance a farmer's stackyard,
An' cheat like ony unhang'd blackguard.
There's some exceptions, man an' woman;
But this is gentry's life in common.

By this, the sun was out o' sight,
An' darker gloamin brought the night;
The bum-clock[r] humm'd wi' lazy drone;
The kye stood rowtin' i' the loan;
When up they gat, an' shook their lugs,
Rejoic'd they were na *men*, but *dogs*;
An' each took aff his several way,
Resolv'd to meet some ither day.

["The tale of 'Twa Dogs' was composed after the resolution of publishing was nearly taken. Robert had had a dog which he called 'Luath' that was a great favourite. The dog had been killed by the wanton cruelty of some person the night before my father's death. Robert said to me that he should like to confer such immortality as he could bestow upon his old friend Luath, and that he had a great mind to introduce something into the book under the title of 'Stanzas to the memory of a quadruped friend;' but this plan was given up for the tale as it now stands. 'Cæsar' was merely the creature of the poet's imagination, created for the purpose of holding chat with his favourite *Luath*."—*Letter of Gilbert Burns*, Vol. iii., Appendix, Currie's Ed.

The main object of this poem, Dr Currie has remarked, "seems to be to inculcate a lesson of contentment on the lower classes of society, by shewing that their superiors are neither much better nor happier than themselves. . . . The dogs of Burns, excepting in their talent for moralizing, are downright dogs, and not, like the horses of Swift, and 'Hind and Panther' of Dryden, men in the shape of brutes."

The first variation we have to notice is in the sixth paragraph of the poem,—some of the poet's more squeamish critics having prevailed on

---

[r] beetle.

'low brither

him to change a very graphic couplet to a very tame and inexpressive one. Accordingly, in the edition of 1794, instead of the lines in our text, we read as follows :—

[1] Until wi' daffin weary grown,
Upon a knowe they sat them down :

and from one of his manuscripts of that period, it might be inferred that the alteration cost him some trouble, as the former line reads thus :—

Till tired at last, and weary grown.

Some close observer of the canine species has remarked that dogs never choose a "knowe" to sit on. The poet's picture ought not therefore to have been meddled with.

The second variation (2) is found in the edition of 1786, where, instead of the improved text, we read thus :—

"An' purge the bitter ga's an' cankers,
O' curst Venetian b—res an' ch--ncres."]

THE AUTHOR'S EARNEST CRY AND PRAYER

TO[1] THE SCOTCH REPRESENTATIVES IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.*

(KILMARNOCK ED., 1786).

Dearest of distillation ! last and best——
——How art thou lost !——

PARODY ON MILTON.

YE Irish lords, ye knights an' squires,
Wha represent our brughs an' shires,
An' doucely [a] manage our affairs
In parliament,
To you a simple poet's [2] pray'rs
Are humbly sent.

[a] honestly.

* This was written before the Act anent the Scotch distilleries, of session 1786, for which Scotland and the Author return their most grateful thanks. —*R. B.*

Alas! my roupet [b] muse is hearse!
Your Honors' hearts wi' grief 'twad pierce,
To see her sittin on her arse
Low i' the dust,
And scriechin out prosaic verse,
An' like to brust!

Tell them wha hae the chief direction,
Scotland an' me's in great affliction,
E'er sin' they laid that curst restriction
On aqua-vitæ;
An' rouse them up to strong conviction,
An' move their pity.

Stand forth, an' tell yon Premier youth [c]
The honest, open, naked truth:
Tell him o' mine an' Scotland's drouth,
His servants humble:
The muckle deevil blaw you south,
If ye dissemble!

Does ony great man glunch [d] an' gloom?
Speak out, an' never fash [e] your thumb!
Let posts an' pensions sink or soom
Wi' them wha grant them;
If honestly they canna come,
Far better want them.

In gath'rin votes you were na slack;
Now stand as tightly by your tack:

---

[b] hoarse with crying. [c] Mr. Pitt. [d] grumble. [e] trouble.

Ne'er claw your lug,[f] an' fidge[g] your back,
An' hum an' haw;
But raise your arm, an' tell your crack[h]
Before them a'.

Paint Scotland greetin[i] owre her thrissle;[j]
Her mutchkin stowp as toom's[k] a whissle;
An' d—mn'd excisemen in a bussle,
Seizin a stell,
Triumphant, crushin't like a mussel,
Or limpet shell!

Then, on the tither hand, present her—
A blackguard smuggler right behint her,
An' cheek-for-chow, a chuffie[l] vintner
Colleaguing join,
Pickin' her pouch as bare as winter
Of a' kind coin.

Is there, that bears the name o' Scot,
But feels his heart's bluid rising hot,
To see his poor auld mither's pot
Thus dung in staves,
An' plunder'd o' her hindmost groat,
By gallows knaves?

Alas! I'm but a nameless wight,
Trode i' the mire* out o' sight!

---

[f] scratch your ear. [g] shrug. [h] speech. [i] weeping.
[j] thistle. [k] empty. [l] fat-faced.

---

* The rhythm here demands that this monosyllable be enunciated as two syllables.

But could I like Montgomeries * fight,
Or gab like Boswell,†
There's some sark-necks I wad draw tight,
An' tie some hose well.

God bless your Honors! can ye see't—
The kind, auld, cantie carlin [m] greet,
An' no get warmly to your feet,
An' gar them hear it,
An' tell them wi' a patriot-heat,
Ye winna bear it?

Some o' you nicely ken the laws,
To round the period an' pause,
An' with rhetòric clause on clause
To mak harangues;
Then echo thro' Saint Stephen's wa's
Auld Scotland's wrangs.

Dempster,‡ a true blue Scot I'se warran;
Thee, aith-detesting, chaste Kilkerran;§
An' that glib-gabbet [n] Highland baron,
The Laird o' Graham;‖
An' ane, a chap that's d—mn'd auldfarran [o]
Dundas his name:¶

Erskine, a spunkie Norland billie;**
True Campbells, Frederick and Ilay;††

---

[m] cheerful old wife. [n] ready-tongued. [o] sagacious.

---

* The Montgomeries of Coilsfield.
† The biographer of Johnson.
‡ George Dempster of Dunnichen, M.P.
§ Sir Adam Ferguson, M.P.
‖ Marquis of Graham, afterwards Duke of Montrose.
¶ Right Hon. Henry Dundas, M.P.
** Thomas, afterwards Lord Erskine.
†† Lord Frederick Campbell, M.P., brother of the Duke of Argyle, and Ilay Campbell, Lord Advocate, afterwards Lord President.

An' Livistone, the bauld Sir Willie;*
An' mony ithers,
Whom auld Demosthenes or Tully
Might own for brithers.

See, sodger Hugh,† my watchman stented,
If poets e'er are represented;
I ken if that your sword were wanted,
Ye'd lend a hand;
But when there's ought to say anent it,
Ye're at a stand.[3]

Arouse, my boys! exert your mettle,
To get auld Scotland back her kettle;
Or faith! I'll wad [p] my new pleugh-pettle,
Ye'll see't or [q] lang,
She'll teach you, wi' a reekin whittle,[r]
Anither sang.

This while she's been in crankous mood,
Her lost Militia‡ fir'd her bluid;
(Deil nor they never mair do guid,
Play'd her that pliskie!) [s]
An' now she's like to rin red-wud [t]
About her whisky.

---

[p] pledge. [q] ere. [r] knife. [s] trick. [t] horn-mad.

---

* Sir Wm. Augustus Cunningham, Baronet, of Livingston, for some time sat as M.P. for the county of Linlithgow, where he had his estate, which he was afterwards compelled to sell in consequence of incurring electioneering debts.

† Col. Hugh Montgomerie, afterwards Earl of Eglintoun.

‡ The Scots Militia Bill was burdened with conditions which liberal Members would not accept, and it was opposed and lost.

An' L—d ! if ance they pit her till't,
Her tartan petticoat she'll kilt,
An' durk an' pistol at her belt,
She'll tak the streets,
An' rin her whittle to the hilt,
I' the first she meets !

For G—d-sake, sirs ! then speak her fair,
An' straik her cannie wi' the hair,
An' to the muckle house repair,
Wi' instant speed,
An' strive, wi' a' your wit an' lear,
To get remead.

Yon ill-tongu'd tinkler, Charlie Fox,
May taunt you wi' his jeers an' mocks ;
But gie him 't het, my hearty cocks !
E'en cowe the cadie ![u]
An' send him to his dicing box
An' sportin lady.

Tell yon guid bluid o' auld Boconnock's,*
I'll be his debt twa mashlum bonnocks,†
An' drink his health in auld Nanse Tinnock's ‡
Nine times a-week,
If he some scheme, like tea an' winnocks,§
Wad kindly seek.

---

[u] message-runner.

---

* Pitt was a grandson of Robert Pitt of Boconnock in Cornwall.

† Bannocks or scones made of a mash of various kinds of grain.

‡ A worthy old hostess of the Author's in Mauchline, where he sometimes studies politics over a glass of gude auld "Scotch Drink."—*R. B.*

§ Some duty was taken off tea, and the loss made up by a window-tax.

Could he some commutation broach,
I'll pledge my aith in guid braid Scotch,
He needna fear their foul reproach
Nor erudition,
Yon mixtie-maxtie, queer hotch-potch,
The "Coalition."*

Auld Scotland has a raucle[v] tongue;
She's just a devil wi' a rung;[w]
An' if she promise auld or young
To tak their part,
Tho' by the neck she should be strung,
She'll no desert.

And now, ye chosen Five-and-Forty,
May still your mither's heart support ye;
Then, tho' a minister grow dorty,[x]
An' kick your place,
Ye'll snap your fingers, poor an' hearty,
Before his face.

God bless your Honors, a' your days,
Wi' sowps o' kail and brats o' claise,
In spite o' a' the thievish kaes,[y]
That haunt St. Jamie's!
Your humble poet[4] sings an' prays,
While Rab his name is.

POSTSCRIPT.

LET half-starv'd slaves in warmer skies
See future wines, rich-clust'ring, rise;

[v] rough and reckless. [w] bludgeon. [x] petted, saucy. [y] jack-daws.

* See note page 66.

Their lot auld Scotland ne'er envies,
But, blythe and frisky,
She eyes her freeborn, martial boys
Tak aff their whisky.

What tho' their Phœbus kinder warms,
While fragrance blooms and beauty charms,
When wretches range, in famish'd swarms,
The scented groves;
Or, hounded forth, dishonor arms
In hungry droves!

Their gun's a burden on their shouther;
They downa bide the stink o' powther;
Their bauldest thought's a hank'ring swither [z]
To stand or rin,
Till skelp—a shot—they're aff, a' throw'ther,
To save their skin.

But bring a Scotchman frae his hill,
Clap in his cheek a Highland gill,
Say, such is royal George's will,
An' there's the foe!
He has nae thought but how to kill
Twa at a blow.

Nae cauld, faint-hearted doubtings tease him;
Death comes, wi' fearless eye he sees him;
Wi' bluidy hand a welcome gies him;
An' when he fa's,
His latest draught o' breathin lea'es him
In faint huzzas.

---

[z] misgiving.

Sages their solemn een may steek,[b]
An' raise a philosophic reek,[c]
An' physically causes seek,
In clime an' season ;
But tell me whisky's name in Greek,
I'll tell the reason.

Scotland, my auld, respected mither !
Tho' whiles ye moistify your leather,
Till,[5] whare ye sit on craps o' heather,
Ye tine[d] your dam ;
Freedom and whisky gang thegither !
Tak aff your dram !

[In this piece, our poet returns, with increased poetic fervour, to the theme of "Scotch Drink." We of this generation are apt to wonder why, in the opening line, he addresses "Irish lords" instead of those of our own Scotland, when hailing the "Scotch representatives in the House of Commons :" but the eldest sons of Scottish peers not being eligible for election in Scotland seems to have been felt by Burns as a national affront. We must therefore regard the prominence here given to "Irish lords" as a pointed stroke of satire. The question was tried by Lord Daer during the poet's lifetime, both in the Court of Session and House of Lords, and decided against him.

The variations are—(1) in the title, where the words "The Right Honourable, and Honourable" are introduced in the author's first edition. (2) For "poet's," the word "Bardie's" was used in all editions previous to that of 1794. (3) This stanza was excluded by the author in published copies,—for what reason Gilbert Burns could not say: but clearly it was to avoid giving offence to the gallant soldier by the allusion to his deficiency as a speaker. (4) The variation here corresponds with number (2). (5) This closing verse which Currie approvingly characterises as a "most laughable, but most irreverent apostrophe," underwent, in the edition of 1794 a change which has been rejected by every editor of the poet. The innovation seems to have been suggested by Mr Alexander Fraser Tytler.

" Till when ye speak, ye ablin's blether,
Yet, deil mak matter !
Freedom and whisky gang thegither,
Tak aff your whitter !"]

---

[b] close. [c] mist. [d] lose.

THE ORDINATION.

(EDINBURGH ED., 1787.)

"For sense, they little owe to frugal Heav'n—
To please the mob they hide the little giv'n."

KILMARNOCK wabsters, fidge [a] an' claw,[b]
An' pour your creeshie [c] nations;
An' ye wha leather rax [d] an' draw,
Of a' denominations;
Swith! [e] to the Laigh Kirk, ane an' a',
An' there tak up your stations;
Then aff to Begbie's * in a raw,
An' pour divine libations
For joy this day.

Curst "Common-sense," that imp o' h-ll,
Cam in wi' Maggie Lauder: †
But Oliphant ‡ aft made her yell,
An' Russell § sair misca'd her:
This day Mackinlay || taks the flail,
An' he's the boy will blaud [f] her!
He'll clap a shangan [g] on her tail,
An' set the bairns to daud her
Wi' dirt this day.

---

[a] shrug. [b] scratch. [c] greasie. [d] stretch. [e] be off! [f] slap.
[g] a cleft stick, or a thistle.

---

* Begbie's Inn, in a small court near the Laigh Kirk.

† Alluding to a scoffing ballad which was made on the admission of the late reverend and worthy Mr Lindsay to the "Laigh Kirk."—*R. B.*

‡ Rev. James Oliphant, minister of Chapel of Ease, Kilmarnock, from 1764 to 1774.

§ Rev. John Russell of Kilmarnock, one of the "Twa Herds." He was successor to Oliphant. See notes pp. 89, 134.

|| Rev. James Mackinlay, subject of the present poem, ordained 6th April 1786. As a preacher, he became "a great favourite of the million"

Mak haste an' turn King David owre,
An' lilt wi' holy clangor;
O' double verse come gie us four,
An' skirl up "the Bangor:" [h]
This day the kirk kicks up a stoure,[i]
Nae mair the knaves shall wrang her;
For Heresy is in her pow'r,
And gloriously she'll whang her,
Wi' pith this day.

Come, let a proper text be read,
An' touch it aff wi' vigour,
How graceless Ham * leugh at his dad,
Which made Canaan a nigger;
Or Phineas † drove the murdering blade,
Wi' whore-abhorring rigour;
Or Zipporah,‡ the scauldin jad,[1]
Was like a bluidy teeger,
I' th' inn that day.

There, try his mettle on the creed,
And bind him down wi' caution,—
That stipend is a carnal weed
He taks but for the fashion;—
And gie him o'er the flock to feed,[2]
And punish each transgression;
Especial, rams that cross the breed,
Gie them sufficient threshin;
Spare them nae day.

---

[h] a favourite psalm-tune. [i] rumpus.

---

* Genesis ix. 22.—*R. B.* † Numbers xxv. 8.—*R. B.*
‡ Exodus iv. 25.—*R. B.*

Now auld Kilmarnock, cock thy tail,
An' toss thy horns fu' canty; [j]
Nae mair thou'lt rowte [k] out-owre the dale,
Because thy pasture's scanty;
For lapfu's large o' gospel kail
Shall fill thy crib in plenty,
An' runts [l] o' grace the pick an' wale,
No gi'en by way o' dainty,
But ilka day.

Nae mair by "Babel's streams" we'll weep,
To think upon our "Zion;"
And hing our fiddles up to sleep,
Like baby-clouts a-dryin!
Come, screw the pegs wi' tunefu' cheep,
And o'er the thairms [m] be tryin;
Oh, rare! to see our elbucks [n] wheep,
And a' like lamb-tails flyin,
Fu' fast this day!

Lang, Patronage, wi' rod o' airn,
Has shor'd [o] the Kirk's undoin;
As lately Fenwick, sair forfairn, [p]
Has proven to its ruin: *
Our patron, honest man! Glencairn,
He saw mischief was brewin;
An' like a godly, elect bairn,
He's waled [q] us out a true ane,
And sound this day.

---

[j] merry. [k] low. [l] roots of cabbage. [m] catgut. [n] elbows.
[o] attempted. [p] distressed. [q] selected.

---

* Rev. Wm. Boyd, a "Moderate," ordained pastor of Fenwick, June '25, 1782.

Now Robertson * harangue nae mair,
But steek [r] your gab [s] for ever;
Or try the wicked town of Ayr,
For there they'll think you clever:
Or, nae reflection on your lear,
Ye may commence a shaver;
Or to the Netherton † repair,
An' turn a carpet-weaver,
Aff-hand this day.

Mu'trie ‡ and you were just a match,
We never had sic twa drones;
Auld "Hornie" did the Laigh Kirk watch,
Just like a winkin baudrons,[t]
And ay he catch'd the tither wretch,
To fry them in his caudrons;
But now his Honor maun detach,
Wi' a' his brimstone squadrons,
Fast, fast[3] this day.

See, see auld Orthodoxy's faes
She's swingein thro' the city!
Hark, how the nine-tail'd cat she plays!
I vow it's unco pretty:
There, Learning, with his Greekish face,
Grunts out some Latin ditty;
And "Common-sense" is gaun, she says,
To mak to Jamie Beattie §
Her plaint this day.

---

[r] shut. [s] mouth. [t] cat.

---

* Rev. John Robertson, colleague of Dr Mackinlay, ordained 1765, died 1798. He belonged to the "Common-sense" order of preachers.

† A district of Kilmarnock, where carpet weaving was largely carried on.

‡ The Rev. John Multrie, a "Moderate" whom Mackinlay succeeded.

§ The poet, and author of an "Essay on Truth," who was reckoned to side with the moderate party in church matters.

But there's Morality himsel,
Embracing all opinions;
Hear, how he gies the tither yell,
Between his twa companions!
See, how she peels the skin an' fell,[u]
As ane were peelin onions!
Now there, they're packèd aff to h-ll,
An' banish'd our dominions,
Henceforth this day.

O happy day! rejoice, rejoice!
Come bouse about the porter!
Morality's demure decoys[4]
Shall here nae mair find quarter:
Mackinlay, Russell, are the boys
That heresy can torture;[5]
They'll gie her on a rape a hoyse,
And cowe[v] her measure shorter
By th' head some day.

Come, bring the tither mutchkin in,
And here's—for a conclusion—
To ev'ry "new-light*" mother's son,
From this time forth, confusion!
If mair they deave us wi' their din,
Or patronage intrusion,
We'll light a spunk,[w] and ev'ry skin,
We'll rin them aff in fusion,
Like oil some day.

[The poet's letter to Richmond of 17th Feb. 1786 intimates that the present poem had already been composed: but it is a curious fact that Dr Mackinlay's ordination did not take place till 6th April thereafter.

[u] bitter-tasting part. [v] cut. [w] a brimstone match.

* A cant-phrase in the West of Scotland, for those religious opinions which Dr Taylor of Norwich has defended so strenuously.—*R. B.*

Chronologists and annotators are thus taught how unsafe it is to dogmatise on any production from internal evidence alone. Thus it is not improbable that even the poem of "The Whistle" was composed in anticipation of the event; with only a few lines added thereafter to record the triumph of Craigdarroch.

Both in this poem and its companion satire, "The Holy Fair," a personality named "Common-Sense" is introduced. This means the "new light," or Arminian doctrine that crept into the teaching of some Scotch pulpits, about the middle of last century, and which Burns lent all the powers of his pen to promote. Here he retraces the history of the "Laigh Kirk" of Kilmarnock so far back as the year 1764, and shows that a series of consecutive appointments of non-evangelical ministers then commenced with the Rev. Wm. Lindsay. He refers to "a scoffing ballad" of that date which more than hinted that the minister obtained that appointment through the influence of his wife, a Miss Margaret Lauder, who had formerly been in high favour with the patron, the Earl of Glencairn. On the present occasion, however, the Earl yielded to the popular wishes, and the refreshing "old light" again spread its halo around the Laigh Kirk. Mackinlay survived till 1841. His son, the Rev. James Mackinlay, died in Edinburgh so recently as June 1876.

The following variations are found in an early manuscript of this poem:—

[1] Come wale a text, a proper verse,
And touch it aff wi' vigour,
How Ham leugh at his father's a——,
Which made Canaan a nigger;
Or Phineas did fair Cozbie pierce
Wi' whore-abhorring rigour;
Or Zipporah, wi' scaulding hearse, &c.

[2] There, try his mettle on the creed,
Wi' form'la and confession;
And lay your hands upon his head,
And seal his high commission,
The holy flock to tent and feed,
And punish each transgression, &c.

[3] Fu' fast. [4] delusive joys. [5] will clap him in the torture.]

EPISTLE TO JAMES SMITH.

(KILMARNOCK ED., 1786.)

Blair

"Friendship, mysterious cement of the soul!
Sweet'ner of Life, and solder of Society!
I owe thee much———" BLAIR.

15.

DEAR SMITH, the slee'st, pawkie thief,
That e'er attempted stealth or rief![a]
Ye surely hae some warlock-breef[b]
Owre human hearts;
For ne'er a bosom yet was prief[c]
Against your arts.

For me, I swear by sun an' moon,
An' ev'ry star that blinks[d] aboon,
Ye've cost me twenty pair o' shoon,
Just gaun to see you;
An' ev'ry ither pair that's done,
Mair taen I'm wi' you.

That auld, capricious carlin, Nature,
To mak amends for scrimpet[e] stature,
She's turn'd you off, a human-creature
On her first plan,
And in her freaks, on ev'ry feature
She's wrote the Man.

Just now I've taen the fit o' rhyme,
My barmie noddle's[f] working prime,

---

[a] robbery. [b] spell. [c] proof. [d] twinkles.
[e] stinted. [f] excited brain.

My fancy yerket[g] up sublime,
Wi' hasty summon:
Hae ye a leisure-moment's time
To hear what's comin?

Some rhyme a neibor's name to lash;
Some rhyme (vain thought!) for needfu' cash;
Some rhyme to court the countra clash,[h]
An' raise a din;
For me, an aim I never fash;
I rhyme for fun.

The star that rules my luckless lot,
Has fated me the russet coat,
An' damn'd my fortune to the groat;
But, in requit,
Has blest me with a random-shot
O' countra wit.

This while my notion's taen a sklent,
To try my fate in guid, black prent;
But still the mair I'm that way bent,
Something cries "Hoolie![i]
I red[j] you, honest man, tak tent![k]
Ye'll shaw your folly;

There's ither poets, much your betters,
Far seen in Greek, deep men o' letters,
Hae thought they had ensur'd their debtors,
A' future ages;
Now moths deform, in shapeless tatters,
Their unknown pages."

---

[g] tightened. [h] gossip. [i] Softly! [j] warn. [k] heed.

Then farewell hopes of laurel-boughs,
To garland my poetic brows!
Henceforth I'll rove where busy ploughs
Are whistlin thrang,
An' teach the lanely heights an' howes
My rustic sang.

I'll wander on, wi' tentless heed
How never-halting moments speed,
Till fate shall snap the brittle thread;
Then, all unknown,
I'll lay me with th' inglorious dead,
Forgot and gone!

But why o' death begin a tale?
Just now we're living sound an' hale;
Then top and maintop crowd the sail,
Heave Care o'er-side!
And large, before Enjoyment's gale,
Let's tak the tide.

This life, sae far's I understand,
Is a' enchanted fairy-land,
Where Pleasure is the magic-wand,
That, wielded right,
Maks hours like minutes, hand in hand,
Dance by fu' light.

The magic-wand then let us wield;
For, ance that five-an'-forty's speel'd,
See, crazy, weary, joyless eild,
Wi' wrinkl'd face,
Comes hostin,[l] hirplin[m] owre the field,
Wi' creepin pace.

---

[l] coughing. [m] limping.

When ance life's day draws near the gloamin,[n]
Then fareweel vacant, careless roamin;
An' fareweel chearfu' tankards foamin,
An' social noise:
An' fareweel dear, deluding woman,
The joy of joys!

O Life! how pleasant, in thy morning,
Young Fancy's rays the hills adorning!
Cold-pausing Caution's lesson scorning,
We frisk away,
Like school-boys, at th' expected warning,
To joy an' play.

We wander there, we wander here,
We eye the rose upon the brier,
Unmindful that the thorn is near,
Among the leaves;
And tho' the puny wound appear,
Short while it grieves.

Some, lucky, find a flow'ry spot,
For which they never toil'd nor swat;
They drink the sweet and eat the fat,
But[o] care or pain;
And haply eye the barren hut
With high disdain.

With steady aim, some fortune chase;
Keen hope does ev'ry sinew brace;
Thro' fair, thro' foul, they urge the race,
An' seize the prey:
Then cannie,[p] in some cozie[q] place,
They close the day.

---

[n] twilight. [o] without. [p] quietly. [q] snug.

And others, like your humble servan',
Poor wights! nae rules nor roads observin,
To right or left eternal swervin,
They zig-zag on;
Till, curst with age, obscure an' starvin,
They aften groan.

Alas! what bitter toil an' straining—
But truce with peevish, poor complaining!
Is fortune's fickle *Luna* waning?
E'en let her gang!
Beneath what light she has remaining,
Let's sing our sang.

My pen I here fling to the door,
And kneel, ye Pow'rs! and warm implore,
"Tho' I should wander *Terra* o'er,
In all her climes,
Grant me but this, I ask no more,
Ay rowth[r] o' rhymes.

"Gie dreeping roasts to countra lairds,
Till icicles hing frae their beards;
Gie fine braw claes to fine life-guards,
And maids of honor;
An' yill an' whisky gie to cairds,[s]
Until they sconner.[t]

"A title, Dempster * merits it;
A garter gie to Willie Pitt;

---

[r] abundance. [s] tinkers. [t] are nauseated.

---

* George Dempster of Dunnichen, M.P., a distinguished patriot referred to in "The Author's Earnest Cry," p. 220.

Gie wealth to some be-ledger'd cit,
In cent. per cent. ;
But give me real, sterling wit,
And I'm content.

" While ye are pleas'd to keep me hale,
I'll sit down o'er my scanty meal,
Be't water-brose or muslin-kail,[u]
Wi' chearfu' face,
As lang's the Muses dinna fail
To say the grace."

An anxious e'e I never throws
Behint my lug, or by my nose ;
I jouk [v] beneath Misfortune's blows
As weel's I may ;
Sworn foe to sorrow, care, and prose,
I rhyme away.

O ye douce [w] folk that live by rule,
Grave, tideless-blooded, calm an' cool,
Compar'd wi' you—O fool ! fool ! fool !
How much unlike !
Your hearts are just a standing pool,
Your lives, a dyke ! [x]

Nae hair-brain'd, sentimental traces
In your unletter'd, nameless faces !
In *arioso* trills and graces
Ye never stray ;
But *gravissimo*, solemn basses
Ye hum away.

---

[u] thin broth. [v] escape. [w] serious. [x] wall.

Ye are sae grave, nae doubt ye're wise;
Nae ferly[y] tho' ye do despise
The hairum-scairum, ram-stam boys,
The rattling squad:
I see ye upward cast your eyes—
Ye ken the road!

Whilst I—-but I shall haud me there,
Wi' you I'll scarce gang ony where—
Then, Jamie, I shall say nae mair,
But quat my sang,
Content wi' you to mak a pair,
Whare'er I gang.

[The only variation found in this poem is in the last verse but one. The word "rattlin" was introduced in 1787, for "rambling" in the previous edition. James Smith, the person here addressed, was a shop-keeper in Mauchline, short of stature but vigorous in mind. From what we have said of him (p. 163, *supra*) as the "wag in Mauchline," celebrated in one of Burns' cleverest epigrams, and as "fiscal" of the "Court of Equity" held at the Whiteford Arms Inn, the reader will need little more information regarding him. He stood Burns' friend "through thick and thin," when he got into difficulties early in the Spring of 1786, in relation to his love-alliance with Jean Armour. The first intimation of trouble regarding that affair is given in the poet's letter to Richmond, 17th Feb. 1786, in which he says: "I have some very important news with respect to myself, not the most agreeable—news that I am sure you cannot guess, but I shall give you the particulars another time. I am extremely happy with Smith; he is the only friend I have now in Mauchline." Smith afterwards had a calico-printing manufactory at Avon, near Linlithgow, but proved unsuccessful. It was his fate to end life sooner even than our poet, and in the very place where Burns at one time expected to end *his*—the West Indies.]

---

[y] wonder.

'Rattlin

THE VISION.

(KILMARNOCK ED., 1786.)

DUAN FIRST.*

THE sun had clos'd the winter day,
The curlers quat their roarin play,†
And hunger'd maukin [a] taen her way,
To kail-yards green,
While faithless snaws ilk step betray
Whare she has been.

The thresher's weary flingin-tree,[b]
The lee-lang day had tired me;
And when the day had clos'd his e'e,
Far i' the west,
Ben i' the spence,[c] right pensivelie,
I gaed to rest.

There, lanely by the ingle-cheek,
I sat and ey'd the spewing reek,
That fill'd, wi' hoast-provoking [d] smeek,
The auld clay biggin;[e]
An' heard the restless rattons squeak
About the riggin.

All in this mottie, misty clime,
I backward mus'd on wasted time,

---

[a] hare. [b] flail. [c] parlour, or inner apartment.
[d] cough exciting. [e] building.

* Duan, a term of Ossian's for the different divisions of a digressive poem. See his Cath-Loda, vol. 2. of M'Pherson's translation.—*R.B.*

† Not only from the hilarity of the game, but from the roaring sound of the curling-stone along the hollow ice.

How I had spent my youthfu' prime,
An' done naething,
But stringing blethers up in rhyme,
For fools to sing.

Had I to guid advice but harket,
I might, by this, hae led a market,
Or strutted in a bank and clarket
My cash-account;
While here, half-mad, half-fed, half-sarket,
Is a' th' amount.

I started, mutt'ring "blockhead! coof!"[f]
An' heav'd on high my wauket loof,[g]
To swear by a' yon starry roof,
Or some rash aith,
That I henceforth wad be rhyme-proof
Till my last breath—

When click! the string the snick did draw;
An' jee! the door gaed to the wa';
An' by my ingle-lowe I saw,
Now bleezin bright,
A tight, outlandish hizzie, braw,
Come full in sight.

Ye need na doubt, I held my whisht;
The infant aith, half-form'd, was crusht;
I glowr'd[h] as eerie 's[i] I'd been dusht,[j]
In some wild glen;
When sweet, like modest Worth, she blusht,
An' stepped ben.

---

[f] fool. [g] work-hardened palm. [h] stared.
[i] frightened. [j] awed into stupor.

Green, slender, leaf-clad holly-boughs
Were twisted, gracefu', round her brows;
I took her for some Scottish Muse,
By that same token;
And come to stop those reckless vows,
Would soon been broken.

A "hair-brain'd, sentimental trace" *
Was strongly markèd in her face;
A wildly-witty, rustic grace
Shone full upon her;
Her eye, ev'n turn'd on empty space,
Beam'd keen with honor.†

Down flow'd her robe, a tartan sheen,
Till half a leg was scrimply seen;
An' such a leg! my bonie Jean ‡
Could only peer it;
Sae straught, sae taper, tight an' clean—
Nane else came near it.

Her mantle large, of greenish hue,
My gazing wonder chiefly drew;
Deep lights and shades, bold-mingling, threw
A lustre grand;
And seem'd, to my astonish'd view,
A well-known land.

---

* A quotation from his own words in the preceding Epistle to James Smith, page 237.

† This couplet was a great favourite with Dr Chalmers, who referred to it as the description of an eye too divine for fallen humanity to possess. His own eye seemed to belie his words as he spoke.

‡ "My bonie Jean." About the month of January or February 1786, when, as we conjecture, this poem was composed, these words must have stood as in the text. But when his poems were at the press, the author's irritation on her account caused him to alter the words to "my Bess, I ween,"—and so they stand in the Kilmarnock edition: but in 1787, that irritation having subsided, Jean was restored to her place of honour in the poem.

Here, rivers in the sea were lost;
There, mountains to the skies were toss't:
Here, tumbling billows mark'd the coast,
With surging foam;
There, distant shone Art's lofty boast,
The lordly dome.

Here, Doon pour'd down his far-fetch'd floods;
There, well-fed Irwine stately thuds:
Auld hermit Ayr staw thro' his woods,
On to the shore;
And many a lesser torrent scuds,
With seeming roar.

Low, in a sandy valley spread,
An ancient borough rear'd her head;
Still, as in Scottish story read,
She boasts a race
To ev'ry nobler virtue bred,
And polish'd grace.*

[By stately tow'r, or palace fair,
Or ruins pendent in the air,
Bold stems of heroes, here and there,
I could discern;
Some seem'd to muse, some seem'd to dare,
With feature stern.

My heart did glowing transport feel,
To see a race heroic † wheel,

---

* Here, in the first edition, *Duan First* came to a close; the additional seven stanzas were appended in the second edition, apparently in compliment to Mrs Dunlop and other influential friends of the author.

† The Wallaces.—*R. B.*

And brandish round the deep-dyed steel,
In sturdy blows;
While, back-recoiling, seem'd to reel
Their suthron foes.

His Country's Saviour,* mark him well!
Bold Richardton's heroic swell;†
The chief, on Sark who glorious fell‡
In high command;
And he whom ruthless fates expel
His native land.

There, where a sceptr'd Pictish shade
Stalk'd round his ashes lowly laid,§
I mark'd a martial race, pourtray'd
In colours strong:
Bold, soldier-featur'd, undismay'd,
They strode[1] along.

Thro' many a wild, romantic grove,‖
Near many a hermit-fancied cove
(Fit haunts for friendship or[2] for love,
In musing mood),
An aged Judge, I saw him rove,
Dispensing good.

---

* William Wallace.—*R. B.*

† Adam Wallace of Richardton, cousin to the immortal preserver of Scottish independence.—*R. B.*

‡ Wallace, laird of Craigie, who was second in command, under Douglas, Earl of Ormond, at the famous battle on the banks of Sark, fought in 1448. The glorious victory was principally owing to the judicious conduct and intrepid valour of the gallant laird of Craigie, who died of his wounds after the action.—*R. B.*

§ Coilus, King of the Picts, from whom the district of Kyle is said to take its name, lies buried, as tradition says, near the family seat of the Montgomeries of Coilsfield, where his burial place is still shown.—*R. B.*

‖ Barskimming, the seat of the Lord Justice-Clerk.—*R. B.* (Sir Thomas Miller of Glenlee, afterwards President of the Court of Session.)

Stewart

With deep-struck, reverential awe,
The learned Sire and Son I saw : *
To Nature's God, and Nature's law,
They gave their lore ;
This,[3] all its source and end to draw,
That,[4] to adore.

Brydon

Brydon's brave ward † I well could spy,
Beneath old Scotia's smiling eye ;
Who call'd on Fame, low standing by,
To hand him on,
Where many a patriot-name on high,
And hero shone.]

DUAN SECOND.

With musing-deep, astonish'd stare,
I view'd the heavenly-seeming Fair ;
A whispering throb did witness bear
Of kindred sweet,
When with an elder sister's air
She did me greet.

" All hail ! my own inspirèd bard !
In me thy native Muse regard ;
Nor longer mourn thy fate is hard,
Thus poorly low ;
I come to give thee such reward,
As we bestow !

---

* Catrine, the seat of the late Doctor and present Professor Stewart. —*R. B.* The father of Dugald Stewart was eminent in Mathematics.

† Colonel Fullerton.—*R. B.* He had travelled under the care of Patrick Brydone, author of a well-known publication, "A Tour through Sicily and Malta."

"Know, the great genius of this land
Has many a light aerial band,
Who, all beneath his high command,
Harmoniously,
As arts or arms they understand,
Their labours ply.

"They Scotia's race among them share:
Some fire the soldier on to dare;
Some rouse the patriot up to bare
Corruption's heart:
Some teach the bard—a darling care—
The tuneful art.

"'Mong swelling floods of reeking gore,
They, ardent, kindling spirits pour;
Or, 'mid the venal senate's roar,
They, sightless, stand,
To mend the honest patriot-lore,
And grace the hand.

"And when the bard, or hoary sage,
Charm or instruct the future age,
They bind the wild poetic rage
In energy,
Or point the inconclusive page
Full on the eye.*

"Hence, Fullarton, the brave and young;
Hence, Dempster's zeal-inspirèd tongue;† Fullarton Dempster

---

* This stanza was added in the second edition (1787).
† "Truth-prevailing tongue" in first edition. See note p. 236.

Beattie

Hence, sweet, harmonious Beattie sung
His 'Minstrel' lays;
Or tore, with noble ardour stung,
The sceptic's bays.

"To lower orders are assign'd
The humbler ranks of human-kind,
The rustic bard, the laboring hind,
The artisan;
All chuse, as various they're inclin'd,
The various man.

"When yellow waves the heavy grain,
The threat'ning storm some strongly rein;
Some teach to meliorate the plain,
With tillage-skill;
And some instruct the shepherd-train,
Blythe o'er the hill.

"Some hint the lover's harmless wile;
Some grace the maiden's artless smile;
Some soothe the laborer's weary toil
For humble gains,
And make his cottage-scenes beguile
His cares and pains.

"Some, bounded to a district-space,
Explore at large man's infant race,
To mark the embryotic trace
Of rustic bard;
And careful note each opening grace,
A guide and guard.

"Of these am I—Coila my name :*
And this district as mine I claim,
Where once the Campbells,† chiefs of fame,
Held ruling pow'r :
I mark'd thy embryo-tuneful flame,
Thy natal hour.

"With future hope I oft would gaze
Fond, on thy little early ways,
Thy rudely caroll'd, chiming phrase,
In uncouth rhymes ;
Fir'd at the simple, artless lays
Of other times.

"I saw thee seek the sounding shore,
Delighted with the dashing roar ;
Or when the North his fleecy store
Drove thro' the sky,
I saw grim Nature's visage hoar
Struck thy young eye.

"Or when the deep green-mantled earth
Warm cherish'd ev'ry floweret's birth,
And joy and music pouring forth
In ev'ry grove ;
I saw thee eye the general mirth
With boundless love.

"When ripen'd fields and azure skies
Call'd forth the reapers' rustling noise,

---

* Burns obtained the idea of this visionary from the "Scota" of Alex. Ross, in the "Fortunate Shepherdess."

† The Loudoun branch of the Campbells is here referred to.

I saw thee leave their ev'ning joys,
And lonely stalk,
To vent thy bosom's swelling rise,
In pensive walk.

"When youthful love, warm-blushing, strong,
Keen-shivering, shot thy nerves along,
Those accents grateful to thy tongue,
Th' adorèd *Name*,
I taught thee how to pour in song,
To soothe thy flame.

"I saw thy pulse's maddening play,
Wild send thee Pleasure's devious way,
Misled by Fancy's meteor-ray,
By passion driven;
But yet the light that led astray
Was light from Heaven.

"I taught thy manners-painting strains,
The loves, the ways of simple swains,
Till now, o'er all my wide domains
Thy fame extends;
And some, the pride of Coila's plains,
Become thy friends.

Thomson "Thou canst not learn, nor I can show,
To paint with Thomson's landscape glow;
Shenstone Or wake the bosom-melting throe,
With Shenstone's art;
Gray Or pour, with Gray, the moving flow
Warm on the heart.

"Yet, all beneath th' unrivall'd rose,
The lowly daisy sweetly blows;
Tho' large the forest's monarch throws
His army-shade,
Yet green the juicy hawthorn grows,
Adown the glade.

"Then never murmur nor repine;
Strive in thy humble sphere to shine;
And trust me, not Potosi's mine,
Nor king's regard,
Can give a bliss o'ermatching thine,
A rustic bard.

"To give my counsels all in one,
Thy tuneful flame still careful fan:
Preserve the dignity of Man,
With soul erect;
And trust the Universal Plan
Will all protect.

"And wear thou *this*"—she solemn said,
And bound the holly round my head:
The polish'd leaves and berries red
Did rustling play;
And, like a passing thought, she fled
In light away.

[When the poet, in his 19th stanza, Duan Second, makes Coila say to him that his fame extends over all her wide domains, he thereby plainly intimates, that several of his effusions had been widely circulated in manuscript prior to 1786; and that for some time past he had been cultivating the patronage of the gentry of the district. In a letter which he addressed to Mrs Dunlop from Edinburgh, on 15th January 1787, he enclosed the seven concluding stanzas of Duan first, as in the text, and wrote as follows:—"I have not composed anything on the great

Wallace, except what you have seen in print, and the enclosed, which I will print in this edition. You will see I have mentioned some others of the name. When I composed my 'Vision' long ago, I had attempted a description of Kyle, of which the additional stanzas are a part, as it originally stood."

To another patroness—Mrs Stewart of Stair—he had presented a manuscript book of ten leaves, folio, containing, along with several early poems, a copy of the Vision. That copy embraces about twenty stanzas which he cancelled when he came to print the piece in his Kilmarnock volume. Seven of these, as we have seen, he restored in printing his second edition, and the remainder of the suppressed verses we now append. The ten leaves of the poet's handwriting just referred to are generally styled the "Stair manuscript." It was purchased by the late Mr Dick, bookseller in Ayr, from the grandson of Mrs Stewart of Stair; and, since Mr Dick's decease, it has been cut asunder and sold piecemeal by his representatives.

Referring to the suppressed stanzas of the 'Vision,' Chambers thus observes:—"It is a curious and valuable document--valuable for an unexpected reason, namely, its proving what might otherwise be doubted, that Burns was not incapable of writing weakly. The whole of the inedited stanzas are strikingly of this character. Perhaps there is after all, a second and a greater importance in the document, as showing how, with the capability of writing ineffectively, his taste was so unerring as to prevent him from publishing a single line that was not fitted to command respect; for every one of the poor stanzas has been thrown out on sending the poem to the press."

SUPPRESSED STANZAS OF "THE VISION."

(Chambers, 1852.)

After 18th stanza of the text:—

With secret throes I marked that earth,
That cottage, witness of my birth;
And near I saw, bold issuing forth
In youthful pride,
A Lindsay race of noble worth,
Famed far and wide.

Where, hid behind a spreading wood,
An ancient Pict-built mansion stood,
I spied, among an angel brood,
A female pair;
Sweet shone their high maternal blood,
And father's air.*

---

* Sundrum.—*R. B.* Hamilton of Sundrum was married to a sister of Colonel Montgomerie of Coilsfield.

An ancient tower* to memory brought
How Dettingen's bold hero fought;
Still, far from sinking into nought,
It owns a lord
Who far in western climates fought,
With trusty sword.

Among the rest I well could spy
One gallant, graceful, martial boy,
The *soldier* sparkled in his eye,
A diamond water;
I blest that noble badge with joy
That owned me *frater*.†

After 20th stanza of the text:—

Near by arose a mansion fine,‡
The seat of many a muse divine;
Not rustic muses such as mine,
With holly crown'd,
But th' ancient, tuneful, laurell'd Nine,
From classic ground.

I mourn'd the card that Fortune dealt,
To see where bonie Whitefoords dwelt;§
But other prospects made me melt,
That village near;‖
There Nature, Friendship, Love, I felt,
Fond-mingling dear!

Hail! Nature's pang, more strong than death!
Warm Friendship's glow, like kindling wrath!
Love, dearer than the parting breath
Of dying friend!
Not ev'n with life's wild devious path,
Your force shall end!

The Pow'r that gave the soft alarms
In blooming Whiteford's rosy charms,
Still threats the tiny, feather'd arms,
The barbèd dart,
While lovely Wilhelminia warms
The coldest heart.¶

---

* Stair.—*R. B.* That old mansion was then possessed by General Stewart and his lady, to whom the MS. was presented.

† Captain James Montgomerie, Master of St James' Lodge, Tarbolton, to which the author has the honour to belong.—*R. B.*

‡ Auchinleck.—*R. B.* § Ballochmyle. ‖ Mauchline.

¶ A compliment to Miss Wilhelmina Alexander as successor, in that locality, to Miss Maria Whitefoord.

After 21st stanza of the text :—

Where Lugar leaves his moorland plaid,*
Where lately Want was idly laid,
I markèd busy, bustling Trade,
In fervid flame,
Beneath a Patroness's aid,
Of noble name.

Wild, countless hills I could survey,
And countless flocks as wild as they ;
But other scenes did charms display,
That better please,
Where polish'd manners dwell with Gray,
In rural ease.†

F. Gray

Where Cessnock pours with gurgling sound ;‡
And Irwine, marking out the bound,
Enamour'd of the scenes around,
Slow runs his race,
A name I doubly honor'd found,§
With knightly grace.

Brydon's brave ward,‖ I saw him stand,
Fame humbly offering her hand,
And near, his kinsman's rustic band,¶
With one accord,
Lamenting their late blessed land
Must change its lord.

The owner of a pleasant spot,
Near sandy wilds, I last did note ;**
A heart too warm, a pulse too hot
At times, o'erran ;
But large in ev'ry feature wrote,
Appear'd, the Man.

In the Text, two of the verses imported from the stanzas originally suppressed, namely, the 2nd and 4th from the close of *Duan First*, show minute variations in the MS. :—

[1] stalked. [2] and. [3] The words This ([3]) and That ([4]) are transposed.

The greater portion of the MS. of these "suppressed stanzas" is in the possession of Robert Jardine, Esq. of Castlemilk, who has obliged us with the use of it in collating and correcting the eight concluding

* Cumnock.—*R. B.*
† Mr Farquhar Gray.—*R. B.*
‡ Auchinskieth.—*R. B.*
§ Caprington.—*R. B.*
‖ Colonel Fullerton (see note, p. 244).—*R. B.*
¶ Dr. Fullerton.—*R. B.*
** Orangefield.—*R. B.*

verses thereof. In that MS., the verse relating to Catrine (21st of the text) is inserted immediately before that referring to Cumnock and the Lugar.]

THE RANTIN DOG, THE DADDIE O'T.

Tune.—"Whare 'll our gudeman lie."

(JOHNSON'S MUSEUM, 1790.)

10, d.

O WHA my babie-clouts will buy?
O wha will tent [a] me when I cry?
Wha will kiss me where I lie?
The rantin dog, the daddie o't.

O wha will own he did the faut?
O wha will buy the[1] groanin maut? [b]
O wha will tell me how to ca't?
The rantin dog, the daddie o't.

When I mount the creepie-chair,[c]
Wha will sit beside me there?
Gie me Rob, I'll seek nae mair,
The rantin dog, the daddie o't.

Wha will crack [d] to me my lane?
Wha will mak me fidgin fain? [e]
Wha will kiss me o'er again?
The rantin dog, the daddie o't.

[The poet attached the following note to this production in the copy of the "Museum" which belonged to his friend Mr Riddell:—"I composed this song pretty early in life, and sent it to a young girl, a particular acquaintance of mine, who was at that time under a cloud."

Although previous annotators have held this to apply to Betty Paton, our conjecture is that the young girl here referred to was Jean Armour, and the period—early in 1786, when the state of matters between them

---

[a] watch. [b] refreshments for the nurse and gossips.
[c] the penance-stool in the church. [d] converse. [e] eagerly fond.

could no longer be concealed. By an unusual neglect on Lockhart's part to "verify his quotations," he condemns the above song, and says it "exhibits the poet as glorying, and only glorying in his shame." We quite agree with Sir Harris Nicolas that both this song referring to Jean, and the "Poet's Welcome" referring to a prior occasion of the same kind, "are remarkable for the tenderness they breathe towards infant and mother alike." There can be little doubt that this and a fragment of song which immediately follows, would be penned and sent to Jean by way of consolation when he first ascertained the result of their tender meetings. The only variation in the MS. is—

[1] my.]

HERE'S HIS HEALTH IN WATER.

Tune.—"The Job of Journey-work."

(JOHNSON'S MUSEUM, 1796.)

ALTHO' my back be at the wa',
And tho' he be the fautor ;[a]
Altho' my back be at the wa',
Yet, here's his health in water.
O wae gae by his wanton sides,
Sae brawlie's he could flatter ;
Till for his sake I'm slighted sair,
And dree[b] the kintra clatter :
But tho' my back be at the wa,'
Yet here's his health in water !

[Another verse of this song, although not in the poet's handwriting, was found among the numerous scraps which were forwarded to the late Mr Pickering ; but as its genuineness cannot be ascertained, we consign it to small type :—

He follow'd me baith out an' in—
The deil haet could I baffle'm !
He follow'd me baith out an' in,
Thro' a' the neuks o' Mauchlin :
And whan he gat me in his grips,
Sae brawly did he flatter,
That had a saint been in my stead,
She'd been as great a fautor :
But let them say or let them do,
Here's Robin's health in water !

[a] defaulter. [b] dread.

Stenhouse, in his note to this song, states that Burns threw it off in jocular allusion to his own and Jean Armour's awkward predicament before their marriage. Allan Cunningham, however, denounces the suggestion as barbarous and insulting to both the lovers. For our part, we see no flagrant inaptitude in the conjecture of Stenhouse.]

ADDRESS TO THE UNCO GUID,

OR THE RIGIDLY RIGHTEOUS.

(EDINBURGH ED., 1787.)

My Son, these maxims make a rule,
An' lump them ay thegither;
The *Rigid Righteous* is a fool,
The *Rigid Wise* anither:
The cleanest corn that e'er was dight
May hae some pyles o' caff in;
So ne'er a fellow-creature slight
For random fits o' daffin.
SOLOMON.—Eccles. ch. vii. verse 16.

O YE wha are sae guid yoursel,
Sae pious and sae holy,
Ye've nought to do but mark and tell
Your neibours' fauts and folly!
Whase life is like a weel-gaun mill,
Supplied wi' store o' water;
The heapèt happer's ebbing still,
An' still the clap plays clatter.

Hear me, ye venerable core,
As counsel for poor mortals
That frequent pass douce Wisdom's door
For glaikit [a] Folly's portals:

---

[a] thoughtless.

I, for their thoughtless, careless sakes,
Would here propone defences—
Their donsie [b] tricks, their black mistakes,
Their failings and mischances.

Ye see your state wi' theirs compared,
And shudder at the niffer; [c]
But cast a moment's fair regard,
What maks the mighty differ?
Discount what scant occasion gave,
That purity ye pride in;
And (what's aft mair than a' the lave) [d]
Your better art o' hidin.

Think, when your castigated pulse
Gies now and then a wallop!
What ragings must his veins convulse,
That still eternal gallop!
Wi' wind and tide fair i' your tail,
Right on ye scud your sea-way;
But in the teeth o' baith to sail,
It maks an unco lee-way.

See Social Life and Glee sit down,
All joyous and unthinking,
Till, quite transmugrify'd, they're grown
Debauchery and Drinking:
O would they stay to calculate
Th' eternal consequences;
Or your more dreaded hell to state,
Damnation of expenses!

---

[b] unlucky. [c] exchange. [d] others.

Ye high, exalted, virtuous dames,
Tied up in godly laces,
Before ye gie poor Frailty names,
Suppose a change o' cases;
A dear-lov'd lad, convenience snug,
A treach'rous inclination;
But, let me whisper i' your lug,
Ye're aiblins [e] nae temptation.

Then gently scan your brother man,
Still gentler sister woman;
Tho' they may gang a kennin [f] wrang,
To step aside is human:
One point must still be greatly dark,
The moving *Why* they do it;
And just as lamely can ye mark,
How far perhaps they rue it.

Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
Decidedly can try us;
He knows each chord, its various tone,
Each spring, its various bias:
Then at the balance let's be mute,
We never can adjust it;
What's done we partly may compute,
But know not what's resisted.

[This is pre-eminently one of those poems whose lines become "mottoes of the heart." In all likelihood, the period in Burns' life we have now reached, in the order of our chronology, was the date of its composition: yet it is rather remarkable that he withheld it from publication in his Kilmarnock edition of that year. There is a prose passage inserted in his Common-place Book, under date March 1784, in which the line of reflection and argument is very similar to that in this poem. The passage being somewhat lengthy, we refer the reader to it in another portion of this work.]

[e] perhaps. [f] admittedly.

THE INVENTORY;

IN ANSWER TO A MANDATE BY THE SURVEYOR OF THE TAXES.

(CURRIE, 1800, COMPD. WITH STEWART, 1801.)

SIR, as your mandate did request,
I send you here a faithfu' list,
O' gudes an' gear,[a] an' a' my[1] graith,[b]
To which I'm clear to gi'e[2] my aith.

10, 6. 0

Imprimis, then, for carriage cattle,
I hae four brutes o' gallant mettle,
As ever drew before a pettle.[c]
My *hand*[3]*-afore's*[d] a guid auld 'has been,'
An' wight an' wilfu' a' his days been:
My *hand*[4]*-ahin's*[e] a weel gaun[5] fillie,
That aft has borne me hame frae Killie,[f]
An' your auld borough mony a time,
In days when riding was nae crime.
[But ance, when in my wooing pride
I, like a blockhead, boost[g] to ride,
The wilfu' creature sae I pat to,
(L—d pardon a' my sins, an' that too!)
I play'd my fillie sic a shavie,
She's a' bedevil'd wi' the spavie.]
My *furr-ahin's*[h] a wordy[6] beast,
As e'er in tug or tow was traced.

---

[a] substantials of any kind. [b] accoutrements. [c] plough-stick.
[d] fore-horse on the left-hand in the plough.—*R. B.*
[e] hindmost on the left-hand in the plough.—*R. B.*
[f] Kilmarnock.—*R. B.* [g] behoved.
[h] hindmost-horse on the right-hand in the plough.—*R. B.*

The fourth's a Highland Donald hastie,
A d—n'd red-wud[i] Kilburnie blastie !
Foreby a cowt,[j] o' cowts the wale,
As ever ran before a tail :
Gin he be spar'd to be a beast,
He'll draw me fifteen pund at least.
Wheel-carriages I ha'e but few,
Three carts, an' twa are feckly[k] new;
An auld wheelbarrow, mair for token,
Ae leg an' baith the trams are broken ;
I made a poker o' the spin'le,
An' my auld mither brunt the trin'le.[l]

For men, I've three mischievous boys,
Run-deils for ranting an' for noise ;
A gaudsman * ane, a thrasher t' other :
Wee Davock hauds the nowt[m] in fother.
I rule them as I ought, discreetly,
An' aften labour them completely ;
An' ay on Sundays duly, nightly,
I on the "Questions" *targe*[n] them tightly ;
Till, faith ! wee Davock's grown[7] sae gleg,[o]
Tho' scarcely langer than your leg,
He'll screed[p] you aff Effectual Calling,[q]
As fast as ony in the dwalling.
I've nane in female servan' station,
(L—d keep me ay frae a' temptation !)
I hae nae wife—and that my bliss is,
An' ye have laid nae tax on misses ;

---

[i] stark-mad. [j] colt. [k] hardly. [l] wheel. [m] cattle.
[n] cross-question. [o] sharp. [p] repeat.
[q] a prominent question and answer in the church catechism.

---

* A driver of the plough team : the name is derived from the practice of using a gaud or prick in some countries where oxen are yoked to the plough.

An' then, if kirk folks dinna clutch me,
I ken the deevils darena touch me.
Wi'[8] weans I'm mair than weel contented,
Heav'n sent me ane mair than I wanted:
My sonsie,[r] smirking, dear-bought Bess,[s]
She stares the daddy in her face,
Enough of ought ye like but grace:
But her, my bonie, sweet wee lady,
I've paid enough for her already;
An' gin ye tax her or her mither,
By the L—d, ye'se get them a' thegither!

And now, remember, Mr Aiken,
Nae kind of licence out I'm takin:
[Frae this time forth, I do declare
I'se ne'er ride horse nor hizzie mair;]
Thro' dirt and dub for life I'll paidle,[t]
Ere I sae dear pay for a saddle;
My travel a', on foot I'll shank it,
I've sturdy bearers, Gude be thankit![9]
[The kirk and you may tak' you that,
It puts but little in your pat;
Sae dinna put me in your beuk,
Nor for my ten white shillings leuk.]

This list, wi' my ain hand I wrote it,
The day and date as under noted;
Then know all ye whom it concerns,
Subscripsi huic, ROBERT BURNS.

MOSSGIEL, February 22, 1786.

[In May 1785, with a view to liquidate ten millions of unfunded debt, Mr Pitt made a large addition to the number of taxed articles, and amongst these were female-servants. It became the duty of Mr

---

[r] plump. [s] see note, page 74. [t] pick my steps.

Aiken, as tax-surveyor for the district, to serve the usual notice on Burns, who on receipt of it made his return in the verses which form our text. Several passages, here marked with brackets, were omitted by Currie; these are supplied from Stewart. The other variations are as follows:—

[1] My horses, servants, carts, and graith. [2] free to tak. [3] lan'-afore.
[4] lan'-ahin'. [5] gude brown. [6] gude grey. [7] turn'd.
[8] For. [9] I've sturdy stumps, the Lord be thankit!
And a' my gates, on foot I'll shank it.]

TO JOHN KENNEDY, DUMFRIES HOUSE.

(CUNNINGHAM'S ED., 1834.)

Now, Kennedy, if foot or horse
E'er bring you in by Mauchlin corse,
(Lord, man, there's lasses there wad force
A hermit's fancy;
An' down the gate in faith they're worse,
An' mair unchancy.)

But as I'm sayin, please step to Dow's,
An' taste sic gear as Johnie brews,
Till some bit callan bring me news
That ye are there;
An' if we dinna hae a bouze,
I'se ne'er drink mair.

It's no I like to sit an' swallow,
Then like a swine to puke an' wallow;
But gie me just a true good fallow,
Wi' right ingine,
And spunkie ance to mak us mellow,
An' then we'll shine.

Now if ye're ane o' warl's folk,
Wha rate the wearer by the cloak,

An' sklent on poverty their joke,
Wi' bitter sneer,
Wi' you nae friendship I will troke,
Nor cheap nor dear.

But if, as I'm informèd weel,
Ye hate as ill's the vera deil
The flinty heart that canna feel—
Come, sir, here's to you!
Hae, there's my haun, I wiss you weel,
An' gude be wi' you.

ROBT. BURNESS.

MOSSGIEL, 3*rd March*, 1786.

[The above lines, collated with the original MS., obligingly communicated by its present possessor, John Adam, Esq., Greenock, form the concluding portion of a letter addressed to Kennedy in reply to a request from him to be favoured with a perusal of the "Cottar's Saturday Night." The poet immediately complied by sending his only copy of that poem; merely requesting his correspondent to make a copy, and return either the original or the transcript. It appears now to be certain that Kennedy adopted the latter course, and retained the holograph, which, along with several letters addressed by Burns to Kennedy, was purchased, about forty years ago, by Mr Cochrane, the London publisher, and by him presented to Allan Cunningham.

Kennedy in 1786 was factor to Patrick, the last Earl of Dumfries, resident at Dumfries House, about half-way between Ochiltree and Auchinleck. In the old Calton burial-ground at Edinburgh, we recently stumbled on the grave-stone of Burns' early friend; from which we transfer the following inscription;—"In memory of John Kennedy, who died at Edinburgh 19th June 1812, aged 55. He was 13 years Factor to the Earl of Dumfries, and 18 to the Earl of Breadalbine." He thus would be born about two years before our bard.]

TO MR M'ADAM, OF CRAIGEN-GILLAN,

IN ANSWER TO AN OBLIGING LETTER HE SENT IN THE COMMENCEMENT OF MY POETIC CAREER.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

SIR, o'er a gill I gat your card,
I trow it made me proud;
'See wha taks notice o' the bard!'
I lap and cry'd fu' loud.

Now deil-ma-care about their jaw,
The senseless, gawky [a] million;
I'll cock my nose aboon them a',
I'm roos'd [b] by Craigen-Gillan!

'Twas noble, sir; 'twas like yoursel,
To grant your high protection:
A great man's smile ye ken fu' well,
Is ay a blest infection.

Tho', by his [c] banes wha in a tub
Match'd Macedonian Sandy!
On my ain legs thro' dirt and dub,
I independent stand ay,—

And when those legs to gude, warm kail,
Wi' welcome canna bear me,
A lee dyke-side, a sybow-tail,[d]
An' barley-scone shall cheer me.

---

[a] silly. [b] praised. [c] Diogenes. [d] leek.

Heaven spare you lang to kiss the breath
O' mony flow'ry simmers !
An' bless your bonie lasses baith,
I'm tauld they're loosome kimmers ![e]

An' God bless young Dunaskin's laird,
The blossom of our gentry !
An' may he wear an auld man's beard,
A credit to his country.

[About March 1786 we suppose to have been the date of the above verses. The poet thought so well of this little production, that he included it in the Glenriddell collection of his early poems, where he states that it was an extempore composition, "wrote in Nanse Tinnock's, Mauchline." Craigengillan is a considerable estate in Carrick. Mr David Woodburn, factor for its owner, was on such friendly terms with Burns, that he received from him a copy of the celebrated cantata, "The Jolly Beggars"—the same which afterwards passed into the hands of Thomas Stewart, the publisher. But another account states that Stewart got the copy directly from Mr John Richmond of Mauchline, who was his uncle. See note to "Jolly Beggars."]

TO A LOUSE.

ON SEEING ONE ON A LADY'S BONNET AT CHURCH.

(Kilmarnock Ed., 1786.)

15.

Ha ! whaur ye gaun, ye crowlin[1] ferlie ?[a]
Your impudence protects you sairlie ;
I canna say but ye strunt[b] rarely,
Owre gauze and lace ;
Tho' faith ! I fear, ye dine[2] but sparely
On sic a place.

---

[e] loveable queans. [a] wonder. [b] strut.

Ye ugly, creepin, blastet wonner,[c]
Detested, shunn'd by saunt an' sinner,
How daur ye set your[3] fit upon her—
Sae fine a lady?
Gae[4] somewhere else, and seek your dinner
On some poor body.

Swith![d 5] in some beggar's hauffet[e] squattle,
Wi' ither kindred, jumping cattle;[6]
There ye may creep, and sprawl, and sprattle,
In shoals and nations;
Whaur horn nor bane[f] ne'er daur unsettle
Your thick plantations.

Now haud you there, ye're out o' sight,
Below the fatt'rels,[g] snug and tight;
Na, faith[7] ye yet! ye'll no be right,
Till ye've got on it—
The vera tapmost, tow'rin[8] height
O' Miss's bonnet.

My sooth! right bauld ye set your nose out,
As plump an' grey as ony groset:[h]
O for some rank, mercurial rozet,
Or fell, red smeddum,[i]
I'd gie you sic a hearty dose o't,
Wad dress your droddum![j]

I wad na been surpris'd to spy
You on an auld wife's flannen toy;[k]

---

[c] indweller. [d] begone! [e] side of the head. [f] small-toothed comb.
[g] folds, or puckerings. [h] gooseberry. [i] pungent stuff.
[j] breech. [k] old fashioned cap. [1] rozin Jurg

Or aiblins[l9] some bit duddie boy,
On's wyliecoat;[m]
But Miss's fine Lunardi![n] fye!
How daur ye do't?

O Jeany,[10] dinna toss your head,
An' set your beauties a' abreid!
Ye little ken what cursed speed
The blastie's makin:
Thae winks an' finger-ends, I dread,
Are notice takin.

O wad some Power the giftie gie us
To see oursel[11] as ithers see us!
It wad frae mony a blunder free us,
An' foolish notion:
What airs in dress an' gait wad lea'e us,
An' ev'n devotion!

[The author was fond of selecting the lower animals as subjects for his muse. We have already seen how much he made of the pet-ewe, the disabled mare, the two dogs, the field-mouse; and now he extracts a wholesome moral from the most hated little animal in nature. Some admirers of Burns have expressed a wish that this poem had never been written; but the last stanza soon became a world-wide proverbial quotation; and if poetical merit were to be estimated by such notoriety, this piece would rank very high. We have had collated with the author's text a MS. copy in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and have adopted a few of its readings as better than the usual version. We note the following variations:—

The title in the MS. reads, "On seeing a Louse on a young Lady's Bonnet at Church." [1] blasted. [2] feet. [3] a fit. [4] Swith.
[5] Gae, transposed with ([4]). [6] Second and third lines transposed.
[7] haith. [8] upmost, topmost. [9] Maybe. [10] Jenny,
[11] oursels.

---

[l] perhaps. [m] under-jacket. [n] balloon-shaped bonnet.*

---

* Vincent Lunardi, on September 15, 1784, ascended from London in an air-balloon—the earliest attempt in Britain; and on 5th October 1785, he performed a like feat from Heriot's Green, at Edinburgh.

INSCRIBED ON A WORK OF HANNAH MORE'S,

PRESENTED TO THE AUTHOR BY A LADY.

(CUNNINGHAM'S ED., 1834.)

THOU flatt'ring mark of friendship kind,
Still may thy pages call to mind
The dear, the beauteous, donor;
Tho' sweetly female ev'ry part,
Yet such a head, and more—the heart
Does both the sexes honor:
She show'd her taste refin'd and just,
When she selected thee;
Yet deviating, own I must,
For sae approving me:
But kind still I'll mind still
The *giver* in the gift;
I'll bless her, an' wiss her
A Friend aboon the lift.[1]

[The poet enclosed a copy of this inscription in a letter to Mr Robert Aiken, dated 3rd April 1786. His plan of publishing a volume of his poems at Kilmarnock was then completed, for he says to his friend and patron,—"My proposals for publishing I am just going to send to the press." It is very remarkable that no biographer or editor of Burns has ever stated or suggested the name of the lady, "Mrs C.," who showed that mark of early attention to Burns, although he refers to it as "the second flattering instance of Mrs C.'s notice and approbation."

Upon no authority beyond reasonable surmise,[2] we venture to say that the lady was Mrs Cunninghame of Enterkin, a daughter of Mrs Stewart of Stair, and a distant relative of Mr Aiken.

On 20th March, the poet had written to Robert Muir of Kilmarnock, hoping to have the pleasure of seeing him there, "before we hear the gowk." That was, of course, to arrange about the printing of his poems; and it is very likely that when he went to Kilmarnock he had his poem of the "Ordination," and perhaps ~~of~~ a sketch of the "Holy Fair" also, in his pocket, both of those pieces being closely associated with the clerical history of that town.

In the face of a chronological line closely linked and well defined,

[1] sky [2] Anmerkung s. IV p. 111

which runs through this portion of the poet's life and labours, some vain gossipers have had the temerity to assert that Burns, before getting his poems printed in Kilmarnock, had proceeded to Glasgow, and entered into some negotiations with ~~Brash & Reid~~ Dunlop & Wilson, printers there. Not a tittle of evidence for this has been adduced; and it is a pity to see the consecutive course of the poet's biography disturbed by the introduction of such manifest fables.]

THE HOLY FAIR.*

(KILMARNOCK ED., 1786.)

A robe of seeming truth and trust
  Hid crafty observation;
And secret hung, with poison'd crust,
  The dirk of defamation:
A mask that like the gorget show'd,
  Dye-varying on the pigeon;
And for a mantle large and broad,
  He wrapt him in *Religion.*

HYPOCRISY A-LA-MODE.

UPON[1] a simmer Sunday morn,
  When Nature's face is fair,
I walkèd forth to view the corn,
  An' snuff the caller[a] air.
The rising sun owre Galston muirs
  Wi' glorious light was glintin;
The hares were hirplin[b] down the furrs,
  The lav'rocks they were chantin
    Fu' sweet that day.

As lightsomely I glowr'd abroad,
  To see a scene sae gay,
Three hizzies,[c] early at the road,
  Cam skelpin up the way.

---

[a] fresh. [b] limping. [c] wenches.

---

* "Holy Fair" is a common phrase in the west of Scotland for a sacramental occasion.—*R. B.*

Twa had manteeles o' dolefu' black,
But ane wi' lyart[d] lining;
The third, that gaed a wee a-back,
Was in the fashion shining,
Fu' gay[2] that day.

The twa appear'd like sisters twin,
In feature, form, an' claes;
Their visage[3] wither'd, lang an' thin,
An' sour as ony slaes:
The third cam up, hap-stap-an'-lowp,
As light as ony lambie,
An' wi' a curchie low did stoop,
As soon as e'er she saw me,
Fu' kind that day.

Wi' bonnet aff, quoth I,[4] "Sweet lass,
I think ye seem to ken me;
I'm sure I've seen that bonie face,
But yet I canna name ye."
Quo' she, an' laughin as she spak,
An' taks me by the hands,
"Ye, for my sake, hae gien[5] the feck[e]
Of a' the ten commands
A screed[f] some day."[6]

"My name is Fun—your cronie dear,
The nearest friend ye hae;
An' this is Superstition here,
An' that's Hypocrisy.
I'm gaun to Mauchline 'holy fair,'
To spend an hour in daffin:[g]
Gin ye'll go there, yon runkl'd pair,
We will get famous laughin
At them this day."

---

[d] grey. [e] greater portion. [f] rend. [g] sport.

Quoth I, "Wi' a' my heart, I'll do't;
I'll get my Sunday's sark on,
An' meet you on the holy spot;
Faith, we'se hae fine remarkin!"[7]
Then I gaed hame at crowdie-time,[h]
An' soon I made me ready;
For roads were clad, frae side to side,
Wi' mony a wearie body,
In droves that day.

Here farmers gash,[i] in ridin graith,[j]
Gaed hoddin[k] by their cotters;
There swankies[l] young, in braw braid-claith,
Are springin[s] owre the gutters.
The lasses, skelpin[m] barefit, thrang,
In silks an' scarlets glitter;
Wi' sweet-milk cheese, in mony a whang,[n]
An' farls,[o] bak'd wi' butter,
Fu' crump that day.

When by the 'plate' we set our nose,
Weel heapèd up wi' ha'pence,
A greedy glowr 'black-bonnet'[p] throws,
An' we maun draw our tippence.
Then in we go to see the show:
On ev'ry side they're gath'rin;
Some carryin dails, some chairs an' stools,
An' some are busy bleth'rin[q]
Right loud that day.

Here stands a shed to fend[r] the show'rs,
An' screen our countra gentry;

---

[h] breakfast-time. [i] sagacious. [j] attire. [k] jolting.
[l] strapping fellows. [m] hastening. [n] thick slice. [o] cakes of shortbread.
[p] by-name for an elder. [q] talking nonsense. [r] ward off.

There 'Racer Jess,'[9]* an' twa-three wh-res,
Are blinkin at[10] the entry.
Here sits a raw o' tittlin jads,
Wi' heavin breasts an' bare neck;
An' there a batch o' wabster lads,[11]
Blackguardin frae Kilmarnock,
For fun this day.

Here some are thinkin on their sins,
An' some upo'[12] their claes;
Ane curses feet that fyl'd his shins,
Anither sighs an' prays:
On this hand sits a chosen[13] swatch,[s]
Wi' screw'd-up, grace-proud[14] faces;
On that a set o' chaps, at[15] watch,
Thrang winkin on the lasses
To chairs that day.

O happy is that man, an' blest!
Nae wonder that it pride him!
Whase ain dear lass, that he likes[16] best,
Comes clinkin down beside him!
Wi' arm repos'd on the chair back,
He sweetly does compose him;
Which, by degrees, slips round her neck,
An's loof upon her bosom,
Unkend that day.†

---

[s] sample.

---

* February 1813, died at Mauchline, Janet Gibson—the "Racer Jess" of Burns' "Holy Fair," remarkable for her pedestrian feats. She was a daughter of "Poosie Nansie" who figures in "The jolly Beggars."—*Newspaper Obituary.*

† "This verse sets boldly out with a line of a psalm. It is the best description ever was drawn. 'Unkend that day' surpasses all."—*James Hogg.*

Blair

Now a'[17] the congregation o'er
Is silent[18] expectation;
For Moodie speels[19] the holy door,*
Wi' tidings o' damnation:[20]†
Should *Hornie,* as in ancient days,
'Mang sons o' God present him,
The vera sight o' Moodie's[21] face,
To 's ain het hame[22] had sent him
Wi' fright that day.

Hear how he clears the points o' Faith
Wi' rattlin and thumpin!
Now meekly calm, now wild in wrath,
He's stampin, an' he's jumpin!
His lengthen'd chin, his turned-up snout,
His eldritch[t] squeel an' gestures,
O how they fire the heart devout,
Like cantharidian plaisters
On sic a day!

But hark! the tent has chang'd its voice;
There's peace an' rest nae langer;
For a' the real judges rise,
They canna sit for anger,
Smith ‡ opens out[23] his cauld harangues,
On practice and on[24] morals;

---

[t] unearthly.

---

* Rev. Alexander Moodie of Riccarton, one of the heroes of the "Twa Herds." His personal appearance and style of oratory are not here caricatured by the poet. Trans. from Culross 1762. Died Feb. 15, 1799.

† Altered from "salvation," by suggestion of Dr Hugh Blair.

‡ Rev. George (subsequently Dr) Smith of Galston, referred to in the "Twa Herds" and also in the "Kirk's Alarm." Ord. 1778. Died 1823.

'cantharides plaisters

An' aff the godly pour in thrangs,
To gie the jars an' barrels
A lift that day.

What signifies his barren shine,
Of moral pow'rs an' reason ?[25]
His English style, an' gesture fine
Are a' clean out o' season.
Like Socrates or Antonine,
Or some auld pagan[26] heathen,
The *moral man* he does define,
But ne'er a word o' *faith* in
That's right that day.

In guid time comes an antidote
Against sic poison'd nostrum ;
For Peebles,* frae the water-fit,[27]
Ascends the holy rostrum :
See, up he's got the word o' God,
An' meek an' mim has view'd it,
While 'Common-sense'[u] has taen the road,
An' aff, an' up the Cowgate †
Fast, fast that day.

Wee Miller ‡ niest, the Guard relieves,
An' Orthodoxy raibles,[v]
Tho' in his heart he weel believes,
An' thinks it auld wives' fables :

---

[u] See foot-note to "The Ordination." [v] holds forth in a hum-drum way.

---

* Rev. Wm. Peebles of "The Water-fit," or Newton-upon-Ayr. Ord. 1778, made a D.D. in 1795, and died in 1825, aged 74.

† A street so called which faces the tent in Mauchline.--*R. B.*

‡ Rev. Alex. Miller, afterwards of Kilmaurs, a short, paunchy man, supposed to be at heart a "moderate." "This stanza," says Chambers, "virtually the most depreciatory in the poem, is said to have retarded Miller's advancement." Ord. in Kilmaurs 1788. Died in 1804.

But faith ! the birkie wants a manse,
So, cannilie he hums them ;
Altho' his carnal wit an' sense
Like hafflins-wise o'ercomes him
At times that day.

Now butt an' ben the change-house fills,
Wi' yill-caup commentators ;
Here's cryin out for bakes an' gills,
An' there the pint-stowp clatters ;
While thick an' thrang, an' loud an' lang,
Wi' logic an' wi' scripture,
They raise a din, that in the end
Is like to breed a rupture
O' wrath that day.

Leeze me on drink ! it gies us mair
Than either school or college ;
It ken'les wit, it waukens lear,[w]
It pangs [x] us fou o' knowledge :
Be't whisky-gill or penny-wheep,
Or ony stronger potion,
It never fails, on drinkin deep,
To kittle up our notion,
By night or day.

The lads an' lasses, blythely bent
To mind baith saul an' body,[28]
Sit round the table, weel content,
An' steer about the toddy :
On this ane's dress, an' that ane's leuk,
They're makin observations ;

---

[w] learning. [x] crams.

While some are cozie i' the neuk,
An' forming assignations
To meet some day.

But now the L—'s ain trumpet touts,
Till a' the hills are rairin,[y]
And echoes back-return the shouts;
Black Russell [30] is na spairin:*
His piercin words, like highlan' [31] swords,
Divide the joints an' marrow;
His talk o' Hell, whare devils dwell,
Our vera "sauls does harrow"† Shakespeare
Wi' fright that day!

A vast, unbottom'd, boundless pit,
Fill'd fou o' lowin brunstane,
Whase ragin flame, an' scorchin heat,
Wad melt the hardest whun-stane!
The half-asleep start up wi' fear,
An' think they hear it roarin;
When presently it does appear,
'Twas but some neibor snorin
Asleep that day.

'Twad be owre lang a tale to tell,
How mony stories past;
An' how they crouded to the yill,
When they were a' dismist;
How drink [32] gaed round, in cogs [33] an' caups,
Amang the furms an' benches;

---

[y] roaring with echo.

---

* Rev. John Russell, one of the "Twa Herds," and "Rumble John" of the *Kirk's Alarm*. Ord. in Kilmarnock 1774. Called to Stirling 1800.

† Shakespeare's "Hamlet."—*R. B.*

An' cheese an' bread, frae women's laps,
Was dealt about in lunches,
An' dawds that day.

In comes a gawsie,[z] gash [a] guidwife,
An' sits down by the fire,
Syne [34] draws her kebbuck [b] an' her knife;
The lasses they are shyer:
The auld guidmen, about the grace,
Frae side to side they bother;
Till some ane by his bonnet lays,
An' gies them't, like a tether,
Fu' lang that day.

Waesucks! [c] for him that gets nae lass,
Or lasses that hae naething!
Sma' need has he to say a grace,
Or melvie [d] his braw claithing!
O wives, be mindfu' ance yoursel
How bonie lads ye wanted;
An' dinna for a kebbuck-heel [e]
Let lasses be affronted
On sic a day!

Now 'Clinkumbell,' wi' rattlin tow,
Begins to jow an' croon;[35]
Some swagger hame the best they dow,
Some wait the afternoon.
At slaps [f] the billies halt a blink,
Till lasses strip their shoon:
Wi' faith an' hope, an' love an' drink,
They're a' in famous tune
For crack that day.

---

[z] jolly. [a] sagacious. [b] cheese. [c] Alas.
[d] soil with meal. [e] end of a cheese. [f] stiles.

/ large piece of bread

How mony hearts this day converts
O' sinners and o' lasses!
Their hearts o' stane, gin night, are gane
As saft as ony flesh is:
There's some are fou o' love divine;
There's some are fou o' brandy;
An' mony jobs that day begin,
May end in 'houghmagandie'
Some ither day.

[Mr Lockhart, after commending the "Cottar's Saturday Night," in eloquent terms, makes this observation,—"That the same man should have produced that poem and the 'Holy Fair' about the same time, will ever continue to move wonder and regret." But the world's "regret" in this matter has been very evanescent; for, although the abuses and absurdities here censured, in connexion with rural celebrations of the communion, have happily disappeared, it cannot be said that the lessons conveyed in the satire are no longer necessary.

Mr Lockhart has farther observed that had Burns "taken up the subject of this rural communion in a solemn mood, he might have produced a piece as gravely beautiful as his 'Holy Fair' is quaint, graphic, and picturesque. Nay," adds the critic, "I can easily imagine a scene of family worship to have come from his hand as pregnant with the ludicrous as the 'Holy Fair' itself." In these circumstances, we cannot be too thankful that Burns followed his own instincts in the mode of treating both subjects.

The communion was administered at Mauchline in those days but once a year, namely, on the second Sunday of August; and Chambers, considering that any portion of the year 1785 was too early a date for this composition, sets it down as being nearly the last piece produced by Burns prior to the publication of his poems in July 1786. The "Ordination" was certainly a production of February of that year, and we feel bound to regard "The Holy Fair" as a riper performance, composed somewhat farther on in the season. We must therefore discard, as utterly improbable, the recently promulgated story, that the present poem underwent a formal reading by its author in Nanse Tinnock's publichouse, in the audience, *inter alia*, of Jean Armour, and the poet's younger brother William.

The rupture between Jean and her lover took place about the end of March 1786,* after which period such a meeting as the story describes

---

* On 15th April, the poet thus wrote regarding Jean—"I had not a hope, nor even a wish, to make her mine after her conduct."

' fornication

was simply impossible. Another strong presumption that this poem was composed after February 1786 arises from the fact that the poet in his letter to Richmond on 17th of that month, asks his friend to forward to him from Edinburgh a copy of Fergusson's poems. In the opening of the "Holy Fair," Fergusson's "Leith Races" is evidently closely followed as a model; an imaginary being called "Mirth" conducts the Edinburgh poet to the scene of enjoyment, exactly as "Fun" in this poem conveys Burns to "Mauchline Holy Fair."*

The following variations are taken from an early MS. of this poem, now preserved in the British Museum :—

[1] 'twas on. [2] braw. [3] faces. [4] qothie. [5] broke. [6] By night or day.

[7] Qothie I'll get my tither coat,
And on my Sunday's sark;
An' meet ye in the yard without
At op'nin o' the wark.

[8] spangin. [9] Bet B——r. [10] sit blinkin. [11] brawds. [12] an' ithers.
[13] goodey. [13] an elect (1st Ed.) [14] wi' mercy-beggin.
[15] on. [16] loves. [17] But now. [18] husht in.
[19] Sawnie climbs. [20] salvation (1st Ed.) [21] Sawnie's.
[22] To Hell wi' speed. [23] Geordie begins. [24] of.

[25] It's no nae gospel truth divine,
To cant o' sense an' reason.

[26] wicked. [27] for Fairy Willy Water-fit. [28] Their lowin' drouth to quench.
[29] punch. [30] Black Jock, he. [31] twae-edged. [32] yill. [33] jugs. [34] then.

[35] Then Robin Gib, wi' weary jow,
Begins to clink and croon.

---

* Lockhart also contends that the "Holy Fair" was the *last* and best of that series of satires wherein the same set of persons were lashed. "Here," says that critic, "unlike the others that have been mentioned, satire keeps its own place, and is subservient to the poetry of Burns. This is indeed an extraordinary performance; no partizan of any sect can whisper that malice has formed its principal inspiration, or that its chief attraction lies in the boldness with which individuals, entitled and accustomed to respect, are held up to ridicule. Immediately on its publication, it was acknowledged (amidst the sternest mutterings of wrath) that national manners were once more in the hands of a NATIONAL POET."

SONG, COMPOSED IN SPRING.

Tune—"Johnny's Grey Breeks."

(EDINBURGH ED., 1787.)

AGAIN rejoicing Nature sees
Her robe assume its vernal hues:
Her leafy locks wave in the breeze,
All freshly steep'd in morning dews.

Chorus.—And maun I still on Menie doat,
And bear the scorn that's in her e'e?
For it's jet, jet-black, an' it's like a hawk,
An' it winna let a body be.*

In vain to me the cowslips blaw,
In vain to me the vi'lets spring;
In vain to me in glen or shaw,
The mavis and the lintwhite sing.
And maun I still, &c.

The merry ploughboy cheers his team,
Wi' joy the tentie seedsman stalks;
But life to me 's a weary dream,
A dream of ane that never wauks.
And maun I still, &c.

The wanton coot the water skims,
Amang the reeds the ducklings cry,
The stately swan majestic swims,
And ev'ry thing is blest but I.
And maun I still, &c.

---

* This chorus is part of a song composed by a gentleman in Edinburgh, a particular friend of the author's. Menie is the common abbreviation of Mariamne.—*R. B.* More correctly, it is the abbreviate of Marion.

The sheep-herd steeks his faulding slap,
And o'er the moorlands whistles shill;
Wi' wild, unequal, wand'ring step,
I meet him on the dewy hill.
And maun I still, &c.

And when the lark, 'tween light and dark,
Blythe waukens by the daisy's side,
And mounts and sings on flittering wings,
A woe-worn ghaist I hameward glide.
And maun I still, &c.

Come winter, with thine angry howl,
And raging, bend the naked tree;
Thy gloom will soothe my cheerless soul,
When nature all is sad like me!
And maun I still, &c.

[The author must have had a very special reason for the retention, through all his own editions, of this chorus, apparently so inappropriate to the sentiment of the song. His main purpose was to shew that slighted love was the cause of his mourning; and he told the truth in his foot-note about the chorus being "part of a song composed by a gentleman in Edinburgh, a particular friend of the author's." This "gentleman in Edinburgh" was none other than the bard himself, who of course was his *own* "particular friend;" and the substitution of the name "Menie" for *Jeanie* was a necessary part of the little *ruse* he chose here to adopt. In like manner, he poured forth about the same time his "Lament occasioned by the unfortunate issue of *a friend's* amour."

The pride of Burns seems to have been galled to the extreme by the position assumed by Jean and her parents, at the time when the poet's acknowledgment of a private marriage with Jean was formally torn up in scorn.

The chorus of this song, however jarring it may seem to the mere reader of the text, has no such effect when sung in slowish time along with the body of the song, to the tune actually chaunted by the poet when in the act of composing it. Gray's "Elegy" was present in his thoughts, while engaged with this composition, as well as that which immediately follows; and indeed the poet acknowledges this in his note to Kennedy which enclosed the "Mountain Daisy." The similarity between verse sixth of this song and verse second of the "Daisy," needs no pointing out.]

TO A MOUNTAIN DAISY.

ON TURNING ONE DOWN WITH THE PLOUGH, IN APRIL 1786.

(KILMARNOCK ED., 1786.)

15.

WEE, modest, crimson-tippèd flow'r,
Thou's met me in an evil hour;
For I maun crush amang the stoure
Thy slender stem:
To spare thee now is past my pow'r,
Thou bonie gem.

Alas! it's no thy neibor sweet,
The bonie lark, companion meet,
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet,
Wi' spreckl'd breast!
When upward-springing, blythe, to greet
The purpling east.

Cauld blew the bitter-biting north
Upon thy early, humble birth;
Yet cheerfully thou glinted[a] forth
Amid the storm,
Scarce rear'd above the parent-earth
Thy tender form.

The flaunting flow'rs our gardens yield,
High shelt'ring woods and wa's maun shield;
But thou, beneath the random bield[b]
O' clod or stane,
Adorns the histie[c] stibble field,
Unseen, alane.

---

[a] sparkled. [b] shelter. [c] dry.

There, in thy scanty mantle clad,
Thy snawie bosom sun-ward spread,
Thou lifts thy unassuming head
In humble guise ;
But now the share uptears thy bed,
And low thou lies !

Such is the fate of artless maid,
Sweet flow'ret of the rural shade !
By love's simplicity betray'd,
And guileless trust ;
Till she, like thee, all soil'd, is laid
Low i' the dust.

Such is the fate of simple bard,
On life's rough ocean luckless starr'd !
Unskilful he to note the card
Of prudent lore,
Till billows rage, and gales blow hard,
And whelm him o'er !

Such fate to suffering worth is giv'n,
Who long with wants and woes has striv'n,
By human pride or cunning driv'n
To mis'ry's brink ;
Till wrench'd of ev'ry stay but Heav'n,
He, ruin'd, sink !

Ev'n thou who mourn'st the Daisy's fate,
That fate is thine—no distant date ;
Stern Ruin's plough-share drives elate,
Full on thy bloom,
Till crush'd beneath the furrow's weight,
Shall be thy doom !

[On 20th April 1786, our poet enclosed this "little gem" to his friend John Kennedy. In that MS. it is called "The Gowan," a title sub-

sequently changed for the English appellation, as above. He thanks Kennedy for having put his name into Mr Hamilton's list of subscribers, and also for requesting a subscription-paper with a view to gather additional names.

Regarding this poem, Burns says, "I am a good deal pleased with some of the sentiments, as they are just the native querulous feelings of a heart which (as the elegantly melting Gray says) 'melancholy has marked for her own.'" It is curious to note that the closing couplet of each of the four concluding verses begins with the same word—"Till."

Grahame, the author of "The Sabbath, and other poems," has the following fine apostrophe to the lark, in connexion with the text of this and the preceding poem :—

"Thou, simple bird
Of all the vocal quire, dwell'st in a home
The humblest, yet thy morning song ascends
Nearest to heaven ;—sweet emblem of *his* song
Who sung thee wakening by the daisy's side !"

We have referred to Gray the poet as having furnished some impulse to Burns in these pieces ; and we are indebted to Dr Carruthers for pointing out that the image in the closing verse of the text is derived from Dr Young :—

"Stars rush, and final Ruin fiercely drives
His plough-share o'er creation."—*Night* ix.]

TO RUIN.

(KILMARNOCK ED., 1786.)

ALL hail, inexorable lord !
At whose destruction-breathing word,
The mightiest empires fall !
Thy cruel, woe-delighted train,
The ministers of grief and pain,
A sullen welcome, all !
With stern-resolv'd, despairing eye,
I see each aimèd dart ;
For one has cut my dearest tie,
And quivers in my heart.
Then low'ring, and pouring,
The storm no more I dread ;
Tho' thick'ning, and black'ning,
Round my devoted head.

And thou grim Pow'r by life abhorr'd,
While life a pleasure can afford,
Oh ! hear a wretch's pray'r !
No more I shrink appall'd, afraid ;
I court, I beg thy friendly aid,
To close this scene of care !
When shall my soul, in silent peace,
Resign life's joyless day—
My weary heart its throbbings cease,
Cold mould'ring in the clay ?
No fear more, no tear more,
To stain my lifeless face,
Enclaspèd, and graspèd,
Within thy cold embrace !

[Here the tone of the closing stanza of the "Daisy" is taken up, and the theme expanded into a little ode. Allan Cunninghan was disposed to see in this piece some reference to apprehended ruin through the failure of the poet's farming efforts at Mossgiel ; but it was the scornful eye of Jean—"jet, jet-black, and like a hawk," that still haunted him ; and he singles out, from the thick-flying darts of destruction around him, the *one* that

. . . . "has cut my dearest tie,
And quivers in my heart."

In the autobiography, he tells us, in reference to the occasion of the "Lament," that it nearly cost him the loss of his reason. Gilbert adds that "The 'Lament' was composed after the first distraction of his feelings had a little subsided."]

THE LAMENT,

OCCASIONED BY THE UNFORTUNATE ISSUE OF A FRIEND'S AMOUR.

(KILMARNOCK ED., 1786.)

"Alas! how oft does goodness wound itself,
And sweet affection prove the spring of woe!"

HOME.

O THOU pale orb that silent shines
While care-untroubled mortals sleep!
Thou seest a wretch who inly pines,
And wanders here to wail and weep!
With woe I nightly vigils keep,
Beneath thy wan, unwarming beam;
And mourn, in lamentation deep,
How life and love are all a dream!

I joyless view thy rays adorn
The faintly-markèd, distant hill;
I joyless view thy trembling horn,
Reflected in the gurgling rill:
My fondly-fluttering heart, be still!
Thou busy pow'r, remembrance, cease!
Ah! must the agonizing thrill
For ever bar returning peace!

No idly-feign'd, poetic pains,
My sad, love-lorn lamentings claim:
No shepherd's pipe—Arcadian strains;
No fabled tortures, quaint and tame.

The plighted faith, the mutual flame,
  The oft-attested pow'rs above,
The promis'd father's tender name;
  These were the pledges of my love!

Encircled in her clasping arms,
  How have the raptur'd moments flown!
How have I wish'd for fortune's charms,
  For her dear sake, and her's alone!
And, must I think it! is she gone,
  My secret heart's exulting boast?
And does she heedless hear my groan?
  And is she ever, ever lost?

Oh! can she bear so base a heart,
  So lost to honour, lost to truth,
As from the fondest lover part,
  The plighted husband of her youth?
Alas! life's path may be unsmooth!
  Her way may lie thro' rough distress!
Then, who her pangs and pains will soothe,
  Her sorrows share, and make them less?

Ye wingèd hours that o'er us pass'd,
  Enraptur'd more, the more enjoy'd,
Your dear remembrance in my breast
  My fondly-treasur'd thoughts employ'd:
That breast, how dreary now, and void,
  For her too scanty once of room!
Ev'n ev'ry ray of hope destroy'd,
  And not a wish to gild the gloom!

The morn, that warns th' approaching day,
  Awakes me up to toil and woe;

I see the hours in long array,
That I must suffer, lingering slow:
Full many a pang, and many a throe,
Keen recollection's direful train,
Must wring my soul, ere Phœbus, low,
Shall kiss the distant western main.

And when my nightly couch I try,
Sore harass'd out with care and grief,
My toil-beat nerves, and tear-worn eye,
Keep watchings with the nightly thief:
Or if I slumber, fancy, chief,
Reigns, haggard-wild, in sore affright:
Ev'n day, all-bitter, brings relief
From such a horror-breathing night.

O thou bright queen, who, o'er th' expanse
Now highest reign'st, with boundless sway!
Oft has thy silent-marking glance
Observ'd us, fondly-wand'ring, stray!
The time, unheeded, sped away,
While love's luxurious pulse beat high,
Beneath thy silver-gleaming ray,
To mark the mutual-kindling eye.

Oh! scenes in strong remembrance set!
Scenes, never, never to return!
Scenes, if in stupor I forget,
Again I feel, again I burn!
From ev'ry joy and pleasure torn,
Life's weary vale I'll wander thro';
And hopeless, comfortless, I'll mourn
A faithless woman's broken vow!

[This highly-finished poem contains passages nearly equal to the author's Address to "Mary in heaven." The reader will observe, that

every stanza contains four lines that rhyme together,—a feat in versification which the poem called "A Dream" again exhibits in a twofold degree—a double *somersault* of rhyme, in short. Dr Currie has referred to the eighth stanza, describing a sleepless night from anguish of mind, as being of very striking excellence. The mere exercise of producing such pieces as those we are now considering helped to soothe the poet's embittered feelings; and the wholesome excitement in connexion with the printing of his poems completed the cure.

The simple-minded James Hogg made a blundering note on this production, through regarding the poet's averment in the title as literally true. He gravely commented on the contents as being a vicarious bewailment for the distress of Burns' friend, Alexander Cunningham, under his celebrated love-disappointment—a circumstance that happened several years after this poem was published.]

DESPONDENCY—AN ODE.

(Kilmarnock Ed., 1786.)

23.

Oppress'd with grief, oppress'd with care,
A burden more than I can bear,
I set me down and sigh;
O life! thou art a galling load,
Along a rough, a weary road,
To wretches such as I!
Dim-backward as I cast my view,
What sick'ning scenes appear!
What sorrows yet may pierce me through,
Too justly I may fear!
Still caring, despairing,
Must be my bitter doom;
My woes here shall close ne'er
But with the closing tomb!

Happy! ye sons of busy life,
Who, equal to the bustling strife,
No other view regard!

Ev'n when the wishèd end's denied,
Yet while the busy means are plied,
They bring their own reward:
Whilst I, a hope-abandon'd wight,
Unfitted with an aim,
Meet ev'ry sad returning night,
And joyless morn the same!
You, bustling and justling,
Forget each grief and pain;
I, listless, yet restless,
Find ev'ry prospect vain.

How blest the solitary's lot,
Who, all-forgetting, all-forgot,
Within his humble cell,
The cavern, wild with tangling roots—
Sits o'er his newly-gather'd fruits,
Beside his crystal well!
Or haply, to his ev'ning thought,
By unfrequented stream,
The ways of men are distant brought,
A faint, collected dream;
While praising, and raising
His thoughts to heav'n on high,
As wand'ring, meand'ring,
He views the solemn sky.

Than I, no lonely hermit plac'd
Where never human footstep trac'd,
Less fit to play the part;
The lucky moment to improve,
And just to stop, and just to move,
With self-respecting art:

But ah ! those pleasures, loves, and joys,
Which I too keenly taste,
The solitary can despise—
Can want, and yet be blest !
He needs not, he heeds not,
Or human love or hate ;
Whilst I here must cry here
At perfidy ingrate !

O enviable early days,
When dancing thoughtless pleasure's maze,
To care, to guilt unknown !
How ill exchang'd for riper times,
To feel the follies, or the crimes,
Of others, or my own !
Ye tiny elves that guiltless sport,
Like linnets in the bush,
Ye little know the ills ye court,
When manhood is your wish !
The losses, the crosses,
That active man engage ;
The fears all, the tears all,
Of dim declining Age !

[In this poem, the same theme as that pursued through the four preceding pieces is exhausted in a very satisfactory manner. Apparently tired himself of stringing mournful rhymes about Jean's "perfidy ingrate," he sets himself to give his youthful compeers the benefit of his dear-bought experience in such words as these :—

"Even when the wished-for end's denied,
Yet, while the busy means is plied,
These bring their own reward."

With enchanting words of the tenderest wisdom, he—only twenty-seven years old—speaks of his own "enviable early days," and then, as if under the sanction of mature age, addresses his young readers thus :—

"Ye tiny elves that guiltless sport,
Like linnets in the bush ;
Ye little know what ills ye court,
When manhood is your wish !" &c.

Meanwhile, Jean had been sent off to Paisley, to avoid seeing her poet-lover, whose heart, like that of Nature herself, abhorred a vacuum. At this juncture—all unobserved—he consoled himself by cultivating a "reciprocal attachment" with a generous-hearted maiden resident in his neighbourhood, whose name he afterwards made immortal by the strength and beauty of his musings over the memory of those stolen interviews.]

TO GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ., MAUCHLINE,

RECOMMENDING A BOY.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

Mossgaville, May 3, 1786.

I HOLD it, sir, my bounden duty
To warn you how that "Master Tootie,"
Alias, "Laird M'Gaun,"
Was here to hire yon lad away
'Bout whom ye spak the tither day,
An' wad hae don't aff han';[a]
But lest he learn the callan[b] tricks—
An' faith I muckle doubt him—
Like scrapin out auld Crummie's nicks,[c]
An' tellin lies about them;
As lieve then,[d] I'd have then,
Your clerkship he should sair,[e]
If sae be ye may be
Not fitted otherwhere.

Altho' I say't, he's gleg[f] enough,
An' bout a house that's rude an' rough,
The boy might learn to swear;
But then wi' *you* he'll be sae taught,
An' get sic fair example straught,
I hae na ony fear.

---

[a] at once. [b] boy. [c] natural rings on the cow's horns.
[d] willingly. [e] serve. [f] sharp.

Ye'll catechise him, every quirk,
An' shore[g] him weel wi' "hell;"
An' gar him follow to the kirk—
Ay when ye gang yoursel.
If ye then, maun be then
Frae hame this comin Friday,
Then please sir, to lea'e, sir,
The orders wi' your lady.

My word of honour I hae gi'en,
In Paisley John's,[h] that night at e'en,
To meet the "warld's worm;"[i]
To try to get the twa to gree,
An' name the airles[j] an' the fee,
In legal mode an' form:
I ken he weel a *snick* can draw,[k]
When simple bodies let him;
An' if a Devil be at a',
In faith he's sure to get him.
To phrase you an' praise you,
Ye ken your Laureat scorns:
The pray'r still, you share still,
Of grateful MINSTREL BURNS.

[This off-hand production explains itself. The poet was about to part with one of the boys on his farm, whose services were coveted by "Master Tootie," a dishonest dealer in cows. The boy had also attracted the attention of Gavin Hamilton, and Burns, who much preferred that the boy should serve Hamilton, wrote this note to him by way of warning.

In the second verse, the poet has imitated the "Madam Blaize" of Goldsmith—

"Her love was sought, I do aver, by twenty beaux and more:
The king himself has followed her—when she has walked before."

---

[g] threaten. [h] Dow's Inn. [i] avaricious reptile.
[j] earnest of a bargain. [k] take advantage by fraud.

In the text, the cowdealer is charged with the dishonest practice of scraping off the natural ridges from the horns of cattle to disguise their age. Another definition of "a sneck-drawer" is a thief who will steal imperceptibly into a house by gently drawing the sneck or bar. The poet has termed Satan a "snick-drawing dog" in the "Address to the Deil." It may please the deil to be informed that Dr Chalmers, in his Scripture readings, applies the same term to the patriarch Jacob.]

VERSIFIED REPLY TO AN INVITATION.

(HOGG AND MOTHERWELL, 1834.)

SIR,

Yours this moment I unseal,
And faith I'm gay and hearty!
To tell the truth and shame the deil,
I am as fou as Bartie:
But Foorsday, sir, my promise leal,
Expect me o' your partie,
If on a beastie I can speel,
Or hurl in a cartie.

Yours,

ROBERT BURNS.

MACHLIN, *Monday night*, 10 *o'clock*.

[From the fact of the poet's name being spelled here with one syllable, we must conclude that it was written after 14th April 1786, when he first adopted the contracted form. The original MS. which has been long preserved in the Paisley Library, affords no clue to the name of the person thus addressed. The English reader may be here informed that Thursday is, in some parts of Scotland, pronounced as written in line fifth of the verses; and it is necessary to explain that "Bartie" is one of the many names given to the devil by Ayrshire peasants.]

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SONG—WILL YE GO TO THE INDIES, MY MARY?

Tune.—"Ewe-Bughts, Marion."

(Currie, 1800.)

Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary,
And leave auld Scotia's shore?
Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary,
Across th' Atlantic's roar?

O sweet grows the lime and the orange,
And the apple on the pine;
But a' the charms o' the Indies
Can never equal thine.

I hae sworn by the Heavens to my Mary,
I hae sworn by the Heavens to be true;
And sae may the Heavens forget me,
When I forget my vow!

O plight me your faith, my Mary,
And plight me your lily-white hand;
O plight me your faith, my Mary,
Before I leave Scotia's strand.

We hae plighted our troth, my Mary,
In mutual affection to join;
And curst be the cause that shall part us!
The hour and the moment o' time!

[This song, addressed to the living Mary Campbell, was composed at some date apparently from the middle of March to 14th May 1786. Whether she was then serving as a nursery-maid with Gavin Hamilton, in Mauchline, or in service elsewhere, it is impossible to determine. The popular belief is that Mary was byres-woman or

dairy-maid at Coilsfield House, when Burns set his affections on her; but that idea has no foundation that we are aware of, beyond a traditional conjecture, first printed in Chambers's "Scottish Songs," 1829. The tradition naturally took its rise from the fact so tenderly recorded by the poet, that his final tryst with her was in that neighbourhood. Besides the song in our text, one or two others, identified with Mary Campbell as their subject, have been preserved. One of these is a Prayer for Mary's protection during the author's wanderings abroad; and another indicates that the frowns of fortune had determined him to "cross the raging sea," in order

> "That Indian wealth may lustre throw
> Around my Highland lassie, O."

The poet, in his autobiography, after referring to his distraction caused by Jean's supposed "perfidy," says—"I gave up my part of the farm to my brother, and made what little preparation was in my power for Jamaica; but before leaving my native country for ever, I resolved to publish my poems." On 20th March, he arranged to meet Robert Muir at Kilmarnock, to forward that object; and on 3rd April, he was just "sending his proposals to the press." One would conclude that the work of arranging and preparing his poems for the printer—not to mention his industrious composing of fresh poems to fill the volume—was enough to occupy his head and hands, without the introduction of the Highland Mary episode at such a time. Nevertheless, he did manage, amid all these engagements, to cultivate the "pretty long tract of reciprocal attachment" which preceded the final parting with Mary on Sunday, 14th May. Such were the strange circumstances under which this song was composed. The inscriptions on the "Highland Mary bible," particularly noticed in connection with the song which follows, are highly suggestive of mystery and secrecy in this rash courtship and inopportune betrothal.

In October 1792, the poet offered this lyric to George Thomson as a substitute or companion-song for the "The Ewe-Bughts, Marion"; but that gentleman did not adopt it. It is not to be understood from the opening line of the song, that Burns asked Mary to accompany him to the West Indies; for his words to Thomson are, "I took the following *farewell* of a dear girl."]

MY HIGHLAND LASSIE, O.

(JOHNSON'S MUSEUM, 1788.)

10, B.

NAE gentle[a] dames, tho' ne'er sae fair,
Shall ever be my muse's care:
Their titles a' are empty show;
Gie me my Highland lassie, O.
Chorus.—Within the glen sae bushy, O,
Aboon the plain sae rashy, O,
I set me down wi' right guid will,
To sing my Highland lassie, O.

O were yon hills and vallies mine,
Yon palace and yon gardens fine!
The world then the love should know
I bear my Highland lassie, O.

But fickle fortune frowns on me,
And I maun cross the raging sea;
But while my crimson currents flow,
I'll love my Highland lassie, O.

Altho' thro' foreign climes I range,
I know her heart will never change,
For her bosom burns with honor's glow,
My faithful Highland lassie, O.

For her I'll dare the billows' roar,
For her I'll trace a distant shore,
That Indian wealth may lustre throw
Around my Highland lassie, O.

---

[a] high-born.

She has my heart, she has my hand,
By secret troth and honor's band!
'Till the mortal stroke shall lay me low,
I'm thine, my Highland lassie, O.

Farewell the glen sae bushy, O!
Farewell the plain sae rashy, O!
To other lands I now must go,
To sing my Highland lassie, O.

[The accompanying cuts represent very faithfully the inscriptions and symbolic markings on the bible presented by Burns to Mary at their parting. The printer's date on the title-page is 1782. When Mary died, in October 1786, the volumes were taken care of by her mother, who survived till August 1828. Several years before that event, she had presented the bible to Mary's surviving sister, Anne, the wife of James Anderson, a stone-mason. That generation had passed away, when the precious relic, together with a lock of *Highland Mary's* hair, turned up at Montreal, in Canada, about the year 1840, whither they had been carried by William Anderson, a son of Mary's sister. Several Scottish residents of that city subscribed and purchased the relics from Anderson, with the object of having them deposited in the poet's monument at Ayr. Accordingly, on 1st January 1841, they were formally handed for this purpose to Provost Limont of Ayr.

So early as 1828, Mr Lockhart remarked that Cromek's interesting details of the parting ceremonials which are supposed to have been transacted between the poet and Mary at their final meeting, "have recently been confirmed very strongly by the accidental discovery of a bible presented by Burns to Mary Campbell, in the possession of her surviving sister." He quotes the inscription from Leviticus XIX. 12 and St Matthew V. 33 very accurately, and adds, "that on the blank leaf opposite one of these texts is written—'Robert Burns, Mossgiel.'"

An examination of those sacred relics suggests the probability that poor Mary, on seeing the certain approach of death, had wilfully erased her own name and that of her poet lover, by wetting the writing and drawing her fingers across it, obliterating the surnames as they now appear. The likelihood is, that Burns, in the whirl of excitement which immediately followed the "Second Sunday of May" 1786, forgot his vows to poor Mary, and that she, heartsore at his neglect, deleted the names from this touching memorial of their secret betrothment.

Notwithstanding all the gossip that has been risked on the subject, our impression is, that—

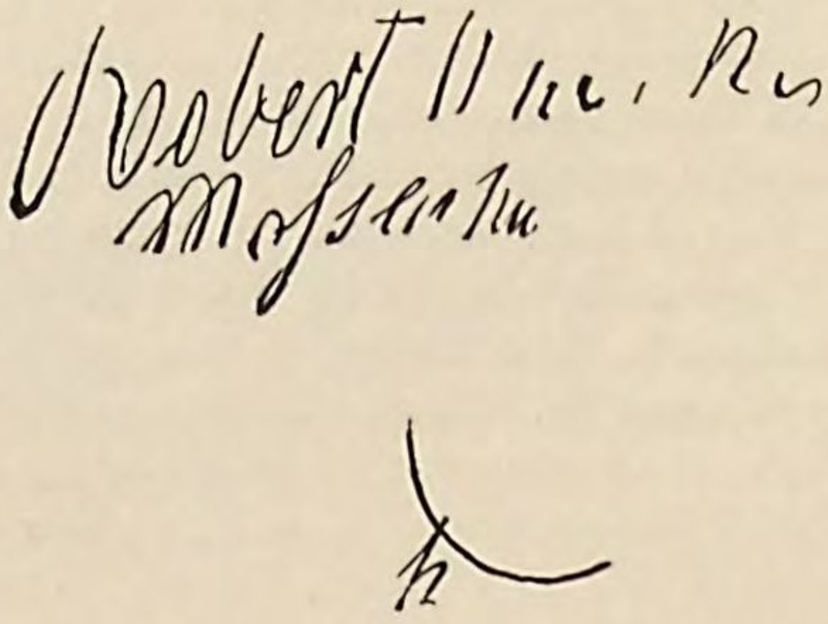
> "She never told her love,
> But let concealment, like a worm i' the bud,
> Feed on her damask cheek"—

that, in short, she came to the same conclusion as poor Olivia, in the "Vicar of Wakefield," did :—

> "The only art . . . . .
> To give repentance to her lover,
> And wring his bosom, is to die."

On the fly-leaf of Volume I. of the bible, the name, "Mary Campbell," followed by the poet's mason-mark, had been inscribed: the latter is still nearly entire; but the name has been almost completely erased, thus :—

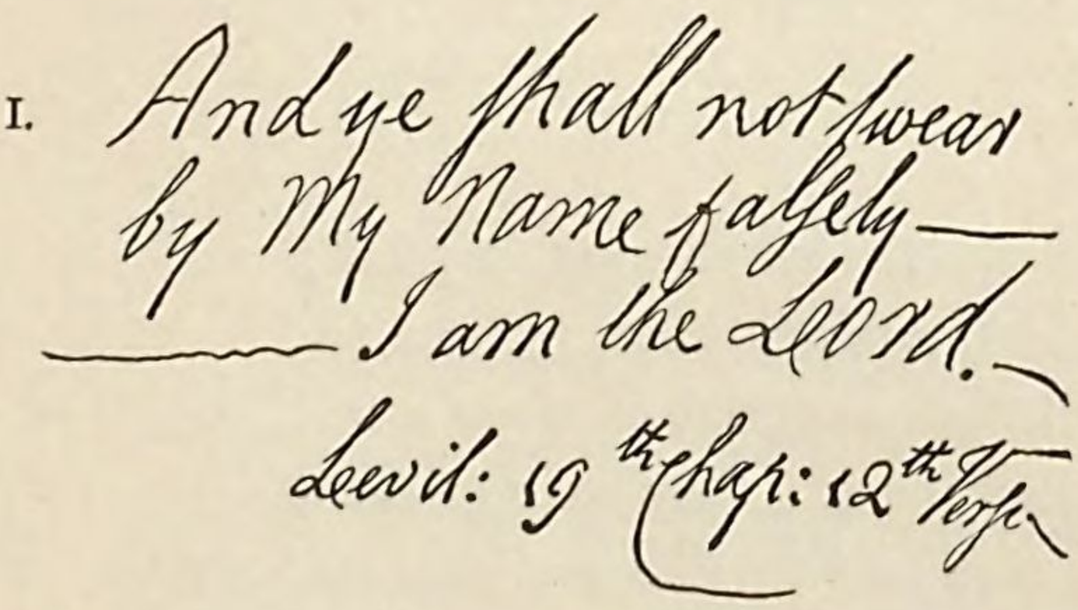
The corresponding blank-leaf in Volume II. had contained the poet's name and address, with the mason-mark subjoined; but these also have been subjected to an erasing process; and now we can only trace as follows :—

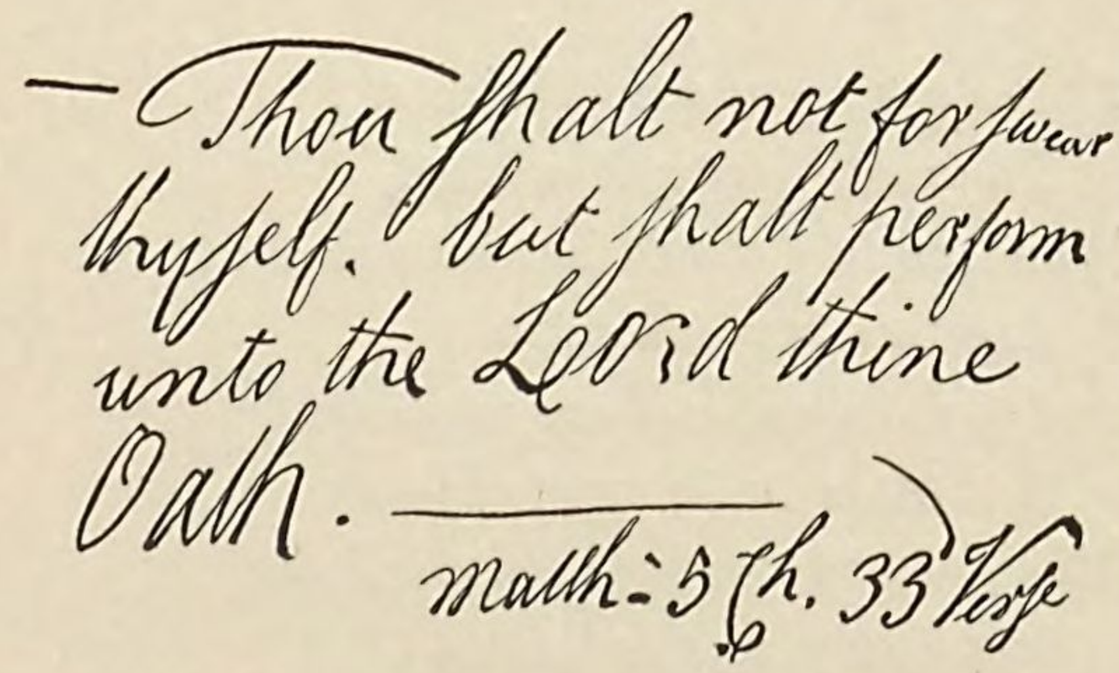


If Mary sunk into the grave without revealing the fact of her betrothal to Burns, it seems equally certain that Burns never whispered her name to a living soul till three years after her decease. It was only when the surpassing beauty and pathos of his sublime dirge—"To Mary in Heaven," awakened a curiosity which he could not avoid in some degree to satisfy, that he uttered a few vague particulars of her story. It was a mysterious episode in the life of Burns, of which the world can never learn the full facts. We incline to give assent to the utterance of his "spiritual biographer," Dr Waddell:—'In connection with this there was neither guilt, nor the shadow of guilt on his conscience;" but when we find Burns, after eighteen months' experience of loving wedlock with his own Jean, suddenly appealing to the shade of Mary in these words:—

"Seest thou thy lover lowly laid?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?"

we feel constrained to say, "if this is not the language of remorse, what is it?"]

Vol. I. 

Vol. II. 

EPISTLE TO A YOUNG FRIEND.

(KILMARNOCK ED., 1786.)

May ——, 1786.

I LANG hae thought, my youthfu' friend,
A something to have sent you,
Tho' it should serve nae ither end
Than just a kind memento:
But how the subject-theme may gang,
Let time and chance determine;
Perhaps it may turn out a sang;
Perhaps, turn out a sermon.

Ye'll try the world soon, my lad;
And, Andrew dear, believe me,
Ye'll find mankind an unco squad,
And muckle they may grieve ye:
For care and trouble set your thought,
Ev'n when your end's attained;
And a' your views may come to nought,
Where ev'ry nerve is strained.

I'll no say, men are villains a';
The real, harden'd wicked,
Wha hae nae check but human law,
Are to a few restricket;
But, och! mankind are unco weak,
An' little to be trusted;
If *self* the wavering balance shake,
It's rarely right adjusted!

Yet they wha fa' in fortune's strife,
Their fate we shouldna censure;
For still, th' important end of life
They equally may answer:
A man may hae an honest heart,
Tho' poortith [a] hourly stare him;
A man may tak a neibor's part,
Yet hae nae cash to spare him.

Ay free, aff han', your story tell,
When wi' a bosom crony;
But still keep something to yoursel
Ye scarcely tell to ony:
Conceal yoursel as weel's ye can
Frae critical dissection;
But keek [b] thro' ev'ry other man,
Wi' sharpen'd, sly inspection.

The sacred lowe [c] o' weel-plac'd love,
Luxuriantly indulge it;
But never tempt th' illicit rove,
Tho' naething should divulge it:
I waive the quantum o' the sin,
The hazard of concealing;
But, och! it hardens a' within,
And petrifies the feeling!

To catch dame Fortune's golden smile,
Assiduous wait upon her;
And gather gear by ev'ry wile
That's justify'd by honor;

---

[a] poverty. [b] look stealthily. [c] flame.

Not for to hide it in a hedge,
Nor for a train attendant;
But for the glorious privilege
Of being independent.

The fear o' hell's a hangman's whip,
To haud the wretch in order;
But where ye feel your honour grip,
Let that ay be your border:
Its slightest touches, instant pause—
Debar a' side-pretences;
And resolutely keep its laws,
Uncaring consequences.

The great Creator to revere,
Must sure become the creature;
But still the preaching cant forbear,
And ev'n the rigid feature:
Yet ne'er with wits profane to range,
Be complaisance extended;
An atheist-laugh's a poor exchange
For Deity offended!

When ranting round in pleasure's ring,
Religion may be blinded;
Or if she gie a random sting,
It may be little minded;
But when on life we're tempest-driv'n—
A conscience but a canker—
A correspondence fix'd wi' Heav'n,
Is sure a noble anchor!

Adieu, dear, amiable youth!
Your heart can ne'er be wanting!
May prudence, fortitude, and truth,
Erect your brow undaunting!

In ploughman phrase, "God send you speed,"
Still daily to grow wiser;
And may ye better reck the rede,[d]
Than ever did th' adviser!

[The young friend here so sagaciously addressed was Andrew Aiken, son of the poet's early patron Robert Aiken, to whom the "Cottar's Saturday Night" is inscribed. He afterwards engaged in mercantile pursuits in Liverpool, where he prospered, and was ultimately appointed English consul at Riga, at which port he died in 1831. Andrew's son, Peter F. Aiken, passed as an advocate in Edinburgh: but instead of practising the law, he became a banker in Bristol, when he still survives in honorable retirement.

In a holograph copy of this epistle, dated "Mossgeil, May 15th 1786," the following additional stanza is introduced, immediately after the sixth verse:—

"If ye hae made a step aside—
Some hap mistake o'erta'en you,
Yet still keep up a decent pride,
And ne'er o'er far demean you;
Time comes wi' kind oblivious shade,
And daily darker sets it;
And if nae mair mistakes are made,
The warld soon forgets it."

Chambers well remarks that "the admirable taste of the poet had doubtless observed this verse to be below the rest in terseness and point, and therefore caused him to omit it in printing." The latter half of stanza fifth has been the subject of some criticism. In 1851, Chambers thus directed attention to it in a foot-note:—"It is not often that the sagacity of Burns is open to challenge; but here certainly he is not philosophically right. It must always be a questionable maxim which proposes to benefit the individual at the expense of his fellow-creatures, or which, if generally followed, would neutralise itself—as this would do." This honest-like objection was not relished by some of the poet's admiring countrymen: in particular, the *Scotsman* of April 10th 1851, in reviewing the first volume of Chambers's labours, remarked that his comments, "when free from platitude, are not always void of offence. The spectacle of Mr Chambers, or indeed almost any man, lecturing upon Burns as deficient in generosity, frankness, and boldness of spirit, does not harmonise with one's idea of the fitness of things." We humbly think that Burns's practice condemned his own maxim. We cannot conceive of his having ever thus acted on the reserve "when wi' a bosom crony:" on the contrary, he did sometimes unguardedly lay him-

[d] use the lesson.

self open to "critical dissection" among those who watched for his halting.

One of the poet's early Carrick associates—the late William Niven, of Kilbride, Maybole—always asserted that this epistle was originally addressed to him, and shifted to Andrew Aiken as a more profitable investment of his rhyming ware. Niven unfortunately could never prove his assertion by production of the original; and there exists a letter from Burns to Niven dated 30th August 1786—a month after the publication of the poem—which is couched in the most friendly terms, and refers to a recent hobnobbing between the poet and him at Maybole. On the other hand, the Rev. Hamilton Paul, in 1819, adverts to Niven's assertion as being a well-known fact, and calls it "the sole instance of disingenuousness which we have heard charged against Burns."]

ADDRESS OF BEELZEBUB.

(Edinburgh Magazine, 1818.)

To the Right Honorable the Earl of Breadalbane, President of the Right Honorable and Honorable the Highland Society, which met on the 23d of May last, at the Shakspeare, Covent Garden, to concert ways and means to frustrate the designs of five hundred Highlanders who, as the Society were informed by Mr M'Kenzie of Applecross, were so audacious as to attempt an escape from their lawful lords and masters whose property they are, by emigrating from the lands of Mr Macdonald of Glengary to the wilds of Canada, in search of that fantastic thing—LIBERTY.

10,6.

Long life, my lord, an' health be yours,
Unskaith'd[a] by hunger'd Highland boors;
Lord grant nae duddie,[b] desperate beggar,
Wi' dirk,[2] claymore, and rusty trigger,[3]
May twin[c] auld Scotland o' a life
She likes—as lambkins[1] like a knife.

Faith, you and Applecross were right
To keep the Highland hounds in sight:
I doubt na! they wad bid[d] nae better,
Than let them ance out owre the water,

---

[a] unharmed. [b] ragged. [c] deprive. [d] offer.

1 Linkum 2 Dolf 3 Dünker (aus Grenzer)

Then up amang thae lakes and seas,
They'll mak what rules and laws they please:
Some daring Hancoke, or a Franklin,
May set their Highland bluid a-ranklin;
Some Washington again may head them,
Or some Montgomery, fearless, lead them;
Till (God knows what may be effected
When by such heads and hearts directed),
Poor dunghill sons of dirt and mire
May to Patrician rights aspire!
Nae sage North now, nor sager Sackville,
To watch and premier o'er the pack vile,—
An' whare will ye get Howes and Clintons
To bring them to a right repentance—
To cowe the rebel generation,
An' save the honor o' the nation?
They, an' be d—d! what right hae they
To meat, or sleep, or light o' day?
Far less—to riches, pow'r, or freedom,
But what your lordship likes to gie them?

But hear, my lord! Glengary, hear!
Your hand's owre light on them, I fear;
Your factors, grieves, trustees, and bailies,
I canna say but they do gaylies;[e]
They lay aside a' tender mercies,
An' tirl[f] the hallions[g] to the birses;[h]
Yet while they're only poind't[i] and herriet,[j]
They'll keep their stubborn Highland spirit:
But smash them! crash them a' to spails,[k]
An' rot the dyvors[l] i' the jails!

---

[e] pretty well. [f] strip. [g] clowns. [h] hairy hides.
[i] distrained. [j] robbed. [k] chips. [l] bankrupts.

The young dogs, swinge them to the labour;
Let wark an' hunger mak them sober!
The hizzies,[m] if they're aughtlins fawsont,[n]
Let them in Drury-lane be lesson'd!
An' if the wives an' dirty brats
Come thiggin[o] at your doors an' yetts,
Flaffin wi' duds, an' grey wi' beas',[p]
Frightin away your ducks an' geese;
Get out a horsewhip or a jowler,[q]
The langest thong, the fiercest growler,
An' gar the tatter'd gypsies pack
Wi' a' their bastards on their back!

Go on, my Lord! I lang to meet you,
An' in my "house at hame" to greet you;
Wi' common lords ye shanna mingle,
The benmost neuk[r] beside the ingle,
At my right han' assigned your seat,
'Tween Herod's hip an' Polycrate;
Or (if you on your station tarrow),[s]
Between Almagro and Pizarro,
A seat, I'm sure ye're weel deservin't;
An' till ye come—your humble servant,

BEELZEBUB.

June 1*st*, *Anno Mundi* 5790.

[This curious production must have been a hasty one, and not much regarded by its author. The only known copy was presented to Mr John Rankine of Adamhill, and through him passed into the hands of a friend who sent it for publication to the editor of the Edinburgh Magazine for February 1818.

M'Kenzie of Applecross is remembered as a liberal-minded, patriotic man, who strove to improve the condition of his tenantry. His views and those of the Highland Society must have been misapprehended by

---

[m] girls. [n] good-looking. [o] begging. [p] vermin.
[q] a bull-dog. [r] innermost corner. [s] take a disrelish.

the bard when he put this address into the mouth of "Beelzebub." The signature of that august personage, detached from the poem, is preserved, among other autographs of Burns, in the collection of W. F. Watson, Esq., Edinburgh.

A curious variation, in line sixth of the poem, must be pointed out. Instead of the word "lambkins," which we adopt from Cunningham and from Pickering, both Motherwell and the Magazine have "butchers." It is difficult to decide which is the proper word: butchers may, while lambs cannot, be supposed to like the knife; but as the author here seems to mean that Scotland detests Breadalbane for his alleged oppression of her poor Highlanders, we prefer the word in the text, as best suiting the poet's ironical strain.]

A DREAM.

(KILMARNOCK ED., 1786.)

Thoughts, words, and deeds, the Statute blames with reason;
But surely *Dreams* were ne'er indicted Treason.

On reading, in the public papers, the Laureate's Ode, with the other parade of June 4th, 1786, the Author was no sooner dropt asleep, than he imagined himself transported to the Birth-day Levee: and, in his dreaming fancy, made the following Address:—

GUID-MORNIN to your Majesty!
May Heaven augment your blisses
On ev'ry new birth-day ye see,
A humble poet wishes.
My bardship here, at your Levee
On sic a day as this is,
Is sure an uncouth sight to see,
Amang thae birth-day dresses
Sae fine this day.

I see ye're complimented thrang,
By mony a lord an' lady;
"God save the King"'s a cuckoo sang
That's unco easy said ay:

The poets, too, a venal gang,
Wi' rhymes weel-turn'd an' ready,
Wad gar[a] you trow[b] ye ne'er do wrang,
But ay unerring steady,
On sic a day.

For me! before a monarch's face,
Ev'n there I winna flatter;
For neither pension, post, nor place,
Am I your humble debtor:
So, nae reflection on your Grace,
Your Kingship to bespatter;
There's mony waur been o' the race,
And aiblins[c] ane been better
Than you this day.

'Tis very true, my sovereign King,
My skill may weel be doubted;
But facts are chiels that winna ding,[d]
An' downa[e] be disputed:
Your royal nest, beneath your wing,
Is e'en right reft[f] an' clouted,[g]
And now the third part o' the string,
An' less, will gang about it
Than did ae day.*

Far be 't frae me that I aspire
To blame your legislation,
Or say, ye wisdom want, or fire
To rule this mighty nation:

---

[a] make. [b] believe. [c] perhaps. [d] be beaten.
[e] cannot. [f] riven. [g] patched.

* A reference to the loss of the North American Colonies.

But faith! I muckle doubt, my sire,
Ye've trusted ministration
To chaps wha in a barn or byre[7]
Wad better fill'd their station,
Than courts yon day.

And now ye've gien auld Britain peace,
Her broken shins to plaister;
Your sair taxation does her fleece,
Till she has scarce a tester[2]:
For me, thank God, my life's a lease,
Nae bargain wearin faster,
Or faith! I fear, that, wi' the geese,
I shortly boost[h] to pasture
I' the craft[i] some day.

I'm no mistrusting Willie Pitt,
When taxes he enlarges,
(An' Will's a true guid fallow's get,[j]
A name not envy spairges),[k]
That he intends to pay your debt,
An' lessen a' your charges;
But, G—d sake! let nae saving fit
Abridge your bonie barges
An' boats this day.*

Adieu, my Liege! may Freedom geck[l]
Beneath your high protection;
An' may ye rax[m] Corruption's neck,
And gie her for dissection!

---

[h] behoved. [i] common-park. [j] offspring. [k] disparages. [l] exult. [m] stretch.

* In the spring of 1786, some discussion arose in parliament about a proposal to give up 64 gun ships, when the navy supplies were being considered.

But since I'm here, I'll no neglect,
In loyal, true affection,
To pay your Queen, wi' due respect,
My fealty an' subjection
This great birth-day.

Hail, Majesty most Excellent!
While nobles strive to please ye,
Will ye accept a compliment,
A simple poet[2] gies ye?
Thae bonie bairntime,[n] Heav'n has lent,
Still higher may they heeze[o] ye
In bliss, till fate some day is sent,
For ever to release ye
Frae care that day.

For you, young Potentate o' Wales,
I tell your Highness fairly,
Down Pleasure's stream, wi' swelling sails,
I'm tauld ye're driving rarely;
But some day ye may gnaw your nails,
An' curse your folly sairly,
That e'er ye brak Diana's pales,
Or rattl'd dice wi' Charlie[p]
By night or day.

Yet aft a ragged cowt's[q] been known,
To mak a noble aiver;[r]
So, ye may doucely fill a throne,
For a' their clish-ma-claver:

---

[n] brood of children. [o] raise. [p] C. J. Fox. [q] colt. [r] draught-horse.
'idle conversation

There, him* at Agincourt wha shone,
Few better were or braver;
And yet, wi' funny, queer Sir John,†
He was an unco shaver
For mony a day.

For you, right rev'rend Osnaburg,‡
Nane sets the lawn-sleeve sweeter,
Altho' a ribban at your lug
Wad been a dress completer:
As ye disown yon paughty[s] dog,
That bears the keys of Peter,
Then swith! an' get a wife to hug,
Or trowth, ye'll stain the mitre
Some luckless day!

Young, royal "tarry-breeks," I learn,
Ye've lately come athwart her—
A glorious galley,§ stem and stern,
Weel rigg'd for Venus' barter;
But first hang out that she'll discern
Your hymeneal charter;
Then heave aboard your grapple-airn,
An', large upon her quarter,
Come full that day.

Ye, lastly, bonie blossoms a',
Ye royal lasses dainty,
Heav'n mak you guid as weel as braw,
An' gie you lads a-plenty!

---

[s] puffed up.

---

* King Henry V.—*R. B.* † Sir John Falstaff, *vid.* Shakspeare.—*R. B.*
‡ Frederick, first a Bishop, and afterwards Duke of York.
§ Alluding to the newspaper account of a certain Royal sailor's amour.—*R. B.* This was Prince William Henry, afterwards King William IV. who in his youth espoused Mrs Jordan the player.

But sneer na British boys awa!
For kings are unco scant ay,
An' German gentles are but sma',
They're better just than want ay
On ony day.

God bless you a'! consider now,
Ye're unco muckle dautet;[t]
But ere the course o' life be through,
It may be bitter sautet:[u]
An' I hae seen their coggie fou,[v]
That yet hae tarrow't[w] at it.
But or the day was done, I trow,
The laggen[x] they hae clautet[y]
Fu' clean that day.

[The poet's letter to Mrs Dunlop (April 30th, 1787,) gives us a hint of some of the difficulties he had to steer through, in his endeavours to be on good terms with patrons, and yet retain his independence. Allan Cunningham has observed that "the merits of 'The Dream' are of a high order—the gaity as well as keenness of the satire, and the vehement rapidity of the verse, are not its only attractions. Even the prose introduction is sarcastic; his falling asleep over the Laureate's Ode was a likely consequence, for the birth-day strains of those times were something of the dullest." Few poetical couplets are oftener quoted than those in verse fourth :—

Facts are chiels that winna ding,
An' downa be disputed.

The poem throughout has been long regarded as prophetic. The closing lines, however, which seemed to suggest a warning of probable constitutional changes like those which France soon experienced, have happily proved of a different character. The only variations (1) (2) occur where the word "poet" was in the author's later editions substituted for "bardie" in the earlier ones. The change was probably made at the suggestion of Mr A. F. Tytler.]

---

[t] petted. [u] salted. [v] dish full. [w] lingered with distaste.
[x] corner of the dish. [y] scraped.

A DEDICATION

TO GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ.

(KILMARNOCK ED., 1786.)

EXPECT na, sir, in this narration,
A fleechin,[a] fleth'rin [b] Dedication,
To roose [c] you up, an' ca' you guid,
An' sprung o' great an' noble bluid,
Because ye're surnam'd like His Grace—
Perhaps related to the race:
Then, when I'm tir'd—and sae are ye,
Wi' mony a fulsome, sinfu' lie,
Set up a face[d] how I stop short,
For fear your modesty be hurt.

This may do—maun do, sir, wi' them wha
Maun please the great-folk for a wamefou;
For me! sae laigh I need na bow,
For, Lord be thanket, I can plough;
And when I downa [e] yoke a naig,
Then, Lord be thanket, I can beg;
Sae I shall say—an' that's nae flatt'rin—
It's just sic poet an' sic patron.

The Poet, some guid angel help him,
Or else, I fear, some ill ane skelp [f] him!
He may do weel for a' he's done yet,
But only—he's no just begun yet.

The Patron (sir, ye maun forgie me;
I winna lie, come what will o' me),
On ev'ry hand it will allow'd be,
He's just—nae better than he shou'd be.

---

[a] begging. [b] flattering. [c] praise. [d] pretence. [e] cannot. [f] thrash.

I readily and freely grant,
He downa see a poor man want;
What's no his ain, he winna tak it;
What ance he says, he winna break it;
Ought he can lend he'll no refus't,
Till aft his guidness is abus'd;
And rascals whyles[g] that do him wrang,
Ev'n that, he does na mind it lang;
As master, landlord, husband, father,
He does na fail his part in either.

But then, nae thanks to him for a' that;
Nae godly symptom ye can ca' that;
It's naething but a milder feature
Of our poor, sinfu', corrupt nature:
Ye'll get the best o' moral works,
'Mang black Gentoos, and pagan Turks,
Or hunters wild on Ponotaxi,
Wha never heard of orthodoxy.
That he's the poor man's friend in need,
The gentleman in word and deed,
It's no thro' terror of d-mn-t-n;
It's just a carnal inclination.[1]

Morality, thou deadly bane,
Thy tens o' thousands thou hast slain!
Vain is his hope, whase stay an' trust is
In moral mercy, truth, and justice!

No—stretch a point to catch a plack;[h]
Abuse a brother to his back;
Steal thro' the winnock[i] frae a whore,
But point the rake that taks the door;

---

[g] occasionally. [h] farthing. [i] window.

Be to the poor like onie whunstane,
And haud their noses to the grunstane;
Ply ev'ry art o' legal thieving;
No matter—stick to sound believing.

Learn three-mile pray'rs, an' half-mile graces,
Wi' weel-spread looves,[j] an' lang, wry faces;
Grunt up a solemn, lengthen'd groan,
And damn a' parties but your own;
I'll warrant then, ye're nae deceiver,
A steady, sturdy, staunch believer.

O ye wha leave the springs o' Calvin,
For gumlie[k] dubs of your ain delvin![l]
Ye sons of Heresy and Error,
Ye'll some day squeel in quaking terror,
When Vengeance draws the sword in wrath,
And in the fire throws the sheath;
When Ruin, with his sweeping besom,
Just frets till Heav'n commission gies him;
While o'er the harp pale Misery moans,
And strikes the ever-deep'ning tones,
Still louder shrieks, and heavier groans!

Your pardon, sir, for this digression:
I maist forgat my Dedication;
But when divinity comes 'cross me,
My readers still are sure to lose me.

So, sir, you see 'twas nae daft vapour;
But I maturely thought it proper,
When a' my works I did review,
To dedicate them, sir, to you:

---

[j] hands. [k] muddy. [l] digging.

Because (ye need na tak' it ill),
I thought them something like yoursel.

Then patronize them wi' your favor,
And your petitioner shall ever ——
I had amaist said, ever pray,
But that's a word I need na say;
For prayin, I hae little skill o't,
I'm baith dead-sweer,[m] an' wretched ill o't;
But I'se repeat each poor man's pray'r,
That kens or hears about you, sir——

"May ne'er Misfortune's gowling bark,
Howl thro' the dwelling o' the clerk![n]
May ne'er his gen'rous, honest heart,
For that same gen'rous spirit smart!
May Kennedy's far-honor'd name *
Lang beet[o] his hymeneal flame,
Till Hamiltons, at least a dizzen,
Are frae their nuptial labors risen:
Five bonie lasses round their table,
And sev'n braw fellows, stout an' able,
To serve their king an' country weel,
By word, or pen, or pointed steel!
May health and peace, with mutual rays,
Shine on the ev'ning o' his days;
Till his wee, curlie John's ier-oe,[p]
When ebbing life nae mair shall flow,
The last, sad, mournful rites bestow!"

---

[m] loath. [n] attorney. [o] fan. [p] great-grandchild.

---

* Mr Hamilton's wife belonged to an ancient and influential family of that name, in Carrick.

I will not wind a lang conclusion,
With complimentary effusion;
But, whilst your wishes and endeavours
Are blest with Fortune's smiles and favours,
I am, dear sir, with zeal most fervent,
Your much indebted, humble servant.

But if (which Pow'rs above prevent)
That iron-hearted carl, Want,
Attended, in his grim advances,
By sad mistakes, and black mischances,
While hopes, and joys, and pleasures fly him,
Make you as poor a dog as I am,
Your 'humble servant' then no more;
For who would humbly serve the poor?
But, by a poor man's hopes in Heav'n!
While recollection's pow'r is giv'n—
If, in the vale of humble life,
The victim sad of fortune's strife,
I, thro' the tender-gushing tear,
Should recognise my master dear;
If friendless, low, we meet together,
Then, sir, your hand—my friend and brother!

[In all likelihood, this characteristic effusion was composed with a view to its occupying a place in front of the author's first publication; but probably its freedom of sentiment and lack of reverence for matters orthodox would stagger its cautious and circumspect typographer. It was accordingly slipped into the book near the close, in fellowship with "The Louse," and some subjects less dainty in character than those first presented to the reader. This "dedication" is nevertheless esteemed one of the best poems in the volume; and none of the author's lines are more frequently on the lips of his readers than some of its pithy sentences. Indeed, the bard's correspondence testifies that he was himself fond of quoting its couplets occasionally. The gentleman to whom it is addressed was, in every respect, a man after Burns' own

heart; and this fact is very quaintly told in the passage where he explains his reason for dedicating the poems to Hamilton :—

"Because—ye needna tak it ill—
I thought them something like yoursel."

According to Mr Lockhart, "Hamilton's family, though professedly adhering to the Presbyterian Establishment, had always lain under a strong suspicion of Episcopalianism. Gavin's grandfather had been curate of Kirkoswald in the troublous times that preceded the Revolution, and incurred popular hatred in consequence of being supposed to have been instrumental in bringing a thousand of the 'Highland host into that region in 1677." We rather suspect this was the *great-grandfather* of the poet's friend, named Claud, who died in 1699, and whose son *John* was a writer in Edinburgh.

Gavin's father was also a writer in Mauchline, inhabiting the old castellated mansion which still exists near the church. Cromek mentions that the Rev. William Auld had quarrelled with the senior Hamilton, and sought every occasion of revenging himself on the son. Be that as it may, our notes at pp. 100 and 102 sufficiently narrate the annoyances to which Gavin was subjected by the Kirk Session; and the author's text there, and elsewhere, shews the measure of the reprisal that followed.

One of the existing representatives of Mr Hamilton is Major Wallace Adair, husband of a granddaughter of Gavin, and himself a grandson of Charlotte Hamilton, sister of the subject of the text.

The only variation we can record is at the close of the 6th paragraph. The author, in his second edition, cancelled a line which there appears in his Kilmarnock volume, forming the last line of a triplet, thus :—

And och ! that's nae regeneration.

Cromek, however, mentions that he had seen a copy of this poem, in which one of Hamilton's great sins, in the eyes of Daddy Auld and Holy Willie, is thus neatly introduced :

He sometimes gallops on a Sunday,
An' pricks his beast as it were Monday.

This looks amazingly like the parody of a couplet in Tam O'Shanter, and the reader will search the text in vain for a possible corner where it might have stood.]

VERSIFIED NOTE TO DR MACKENZIE, MAUCHLINE.

(HOGG AND MOTHERWELL, 1835.)

FRIDAY first 's the day appointed
By the Right Worshipful anointed,
To hold our grand procession;
To get a blad o' Johnie's morals,
And taste a swatch [a] o' Manson's barrels
I' the way of our profession.
The Master and the Brotherhood
Would a' be glad to see you;
For me I would be mair than proud
To share the mercies wi' you.
If Death, then, wi' skaith,[b] then,
Some mortal heart is hechtin,[c]
Inform him, and storm [d] him,
That Saturday you'll fecht him.

ROBERT BURNS.

Mossgiel, An. M. 5790.

[The masonic date appended to the foregoing rhyme, signifies A. D. 1786. Our notes hitherto, (except in connection with the bacchanalian song given at page 38,) have had no occasion to refer to the poet's passion for Free-masonry. He had, in July 1784, been raised to the position of Depute Master of St James' Lodge, Tarbolton, from which period down to May 1788, he continued frequently to sign the minutes in that capacity. On 24th June 1786, being St John's Day, a grand procession of the lodge took place by previous arrangement, and the lines forming the text shew the style in which he invited his brother-mason, Dr Mackenzie, to be present on the occasion. The Lodge held its meetings in a back-room of the principal inn of the village kept by a person named Manson. It is not very clear who was the "Johnie" thus expected to dilate on morals: Professor Walker tells us it was John Mackenzie himself, whose favourite topic was "the origin of Morals."]

---

[a] sample. [b] harm. [c] threatening [d] bully.

THE FAREWELL.

TO THE BRETHREN OF ST. JAMES'S LODGE, TARBOLTON.

Tune—"Goodnight, and joy be wi' you a'."

(KILMARNOCK ED., 1786).

ADIEU! a heart-warm, fond adieu;
Dear brothers of the *mystic tye!*
Ye favoured, *enlighten'd* few,
Companions of my social joy;
Tho' I to foreign lands must hie,
Pursuing Fortune's slidd'ry ba';
With melting heart, and brimful eye,
I'll mind you still, tho' far awa.

Oft have I met your social band,
And spent the cheerful, festive night:
Oft, honour'd with supreme command,
Presided o'er the *sons of light:*
And by that *hieroglyphic* bright,
Which none but *Craftsmen* ever saw!
Strong Mem'ry on my heart shall write
Those happy scenes, when far awa.

May Freedom, Harmony, and Love,
Unite you in the *grand Design,*
Beneath th' Omniscient Eye above—
The glorious *Architect* Divine,
That you may keep th' *unerring line,*
Still rising by the *plummet's law,*
Till *Order* bright completely shine,
Shall be my pray'r when far awa.

And *you*, farewell! whose merits claim
Justly that *highest badge*[1] to wear:
Heav'n bless your honour'd, noble name,
To *Masonry* and *Scotia* dear!
A last request permit me here,—
When yearly ye assemble a',
One *round*, I ask it with a *tear*,
To him, *the Bard that's far awa.*

[An examination of the minute-book of the lodge shews that on 23d June 1786, the poet was present at a meeting preparatory to the grand procession referred to in the last piece. No other lodge-meeting was held till the 29th of July, which Burns also attended; and as the present song formed part of the volume which was put into the hands of the public on the last day of that month, we may assume that the occasion on which the poet repeated or sang the verses to the brethren was on the 23d or 24th of June. He was then full of the intention of sailing before the close of August; for we find him writing to a friend on 30th July:—

"My hour is now come: you and I shall never meet in Britain more. I have orders, within three weeks at furthest, to repair aboard the *Nancy*, Captain Smith, from Clyde to Jamaica."

It would appear that Captain James Montgomery (a younger brother of Col. Hugh Montgomery of Coilsfield) was, about this period, Grandmaster of St James Lodge; and Chambers tells us that the first four lines of the closing stanza of this song refer to him. On the other hand, a little work of some pretentions, called "A winter with Robert Burns," asserts that the reference is to William Wallace "of the Tarbolton St. David's," Sheriff of the County of Ayr—a name "to masonry and Scotia dear." Strange to say, a note in the "Aldine" edition tells us that this half-stanza refers to Sir John Whitefoord.]

[1] Franzosen

15.

ON A SCOTCH BARD,

GONE TO THE WEST INDIES.

(KILMARNOCK ED., 1786.)

A' YE wha live by sowps[a] o' drink,
A' ye wha live by crambo-clink,[b]
A' ye wha live and never think,
Come, mourn wi' me!
Our billie's[c] gien us a' a jink,[1]
An' owre the sea!

Lament him a' ye rantin core,
Wha dearly like a random-splore;[d]
Nae mair he'll join the merry roar,
In social key;
For now he's taen anither shore,[2]
An' owre the sea!

The bonie lasses weel may wiss him,[1]
And in their dear petitions place him:[3]
The widows, wives, an' a' may bless him
Wi' tearfu' e'e,
For weel I wat they'll sairly miss him
That's owre the sea!

O Fortune, they hae room to grumble!
Hadst thou taen aff some drowsy bummle,[e]
Wha can do nought but fyke an' fumble,
'Twad been nae plea;
But he was gleg[2] as onie wumble,[f]
That's owre the sea!

---

[a] spoonfuls. [b] versifying. [c] brother. [d] frolic. [e] blunderer.
[f] joiner's gimlet. [1] wish [2] sharp

Auld, cantie Kyle may weepers[g] wear,
An' stain them wi' the saut, saut tear:
'Twill mak[4] her poor auld heart, I fear,
In flinders[h] flee:
He was her Laureat monie a year,
That's owre the sea!

He saw Misfortune's cauld nor-west
Lang mustering up a bitter blast;
A jillet[i] brak his heart at last,
Ill may she be!
So, took a berth afore the mast,
An' owre the sea.

To tremble under Fortune's cummock,[j]
On[5] scarce a bellyfu' o' drummock,[k]
Wi' his proud, independent stomach,
Could ill agree;
So, row't his hurdies[l] in a hammock,
An' owre the sea.

He ne'er was gien to great misguidin,
Yet coin his pouches wad na bide in;
Wi' him it ne'er was under hidin;
He dealt it free:
The Muse was a' that he took pride in,
That's owre the sea.

Jamaica bodies, use him weel,
An' hap him in a cozie biel:[m]

---

[g] a stripe of white muslin on the cuffs of mourners. [h] fragments. [i] jilt. [j] cudgel. [k] meal and water mixed. [l] posteriors. [m] comfortable shelter

Ye'll find him ay a dainty chiel,
An' fou o' glee:
He wad na wrang'd the vera deil,
That's owre the sea.

Fareweel, my rhyme-composing billie![6]
Your native soil was right ill-willie;
But may ye flourish like a lily,
Now bonilie!
I'll toast you in my hindmost gillie,[n]
Tho' owre the sea!

[This playful ode shines out cheerfully among the poet's more pathetic leave-takings of the period. He puts it into the mouth of an imaginary "rhyme-composing brother;" but not one of the tribe, except the bard of Kyle himself, could have produced such an original and happy strain. His own picture is painted to the life, in all his "ranting, roving Robin-hood;" and yet, amid his rollicking, he throws in a touch of the true pathetic, just to show his reader how

"Chords that vibrate sweetest pleasure,
Thrill the deepest notes of woe."

He who, only a few months before, had sung so despairingly in "The Lament," and kindred effusions, concerning

"A faithless woman's broken vow,"

here reverts to the same theme in a strain of smothered bitterness:—

"He saw Misfortune's cauld nor-west
Lang mustering up a bitter blast;
A jillet brak his heart at last,
Ill may she be!
So, took a berth afore the mast,
An' owre the sea."

The variations annexed are from a MS. copy, formerly possessed by Mr Pickering of London.

[1] Our billie, Rob, has taen a jink. [2] He's canter'd to anither shore.
[3] An' pray kind Fortune to redress him. [4] gar. [5] An'
[6] Then fare-ye-weel, my rhymin billie.]

---

[n] gill of whisky.

SONG.—FAREWELL TO ELIZA.

Tune—"Gilderoy."

(KILMARNOCK ED., 1786.)

FROM thee, Eliza, I must go,
And from my native shore;
The cruel fates between us throw
A boundless ocean's roar:
But boundless oceans, roaring wide,
Between my love and me,
They never, never can divide
My heart and soul from thee.

Farewell, farewell, Eliza dear,
The maid that I adore!
A boding voice is in mine ear,
We part to meet no more!
But the latest throb that leaves my heart,
While Death stands victor by,—
That throb, Eliza, is thy part,
And thine that latest sigh!

[In the Ode on a Scotch Bard, the author took a general farewell of the "bonie lasses—widows, wives an' a'," and here he singles out one in particular, from among "the belles of Mauchline," in whom he seems to have a more special interest. The language is almost identical with that in which he addressed Jean Armour shortly before, "Tho' cruel fate," &c. (see p. 130). That he really had some of "his random fits o' daffin" with a young woman bearing this Christian name, is evident from a few words that dropped from him after his "eclatant return" from Edinburgh to Mauchline.

On 11th June 1787, in a letter to his friend James Smith, then at Linlithgow, he says—"Your mother, sister, and brother; my quondam Eliza, &c., are all well." Chambers, from a variety of circumstances, came to the conclusion that this "Eliza" was the "braw Miss Betty" of the "six proper young belles," so distinguished by the poet in his canzonette given at page 76. She was sister to Miss Helen Miller, the wife of Dr Mackenzie, and died shortly after being married to a Mr Templeton.]

A BARD'S EPITAPH.

(Kilmarnock Ed., 1786.)

Is there a whim-inspirèd fool,
Owre fast for thought, owre hot for rule,
Owre blate[a] to seek, owre proud to snool,[b]
Let him draw near;
And owre this grassy heap sing dool,
And drap a tear.

Is there a bard of rustic song,
Who, noteless, steals the crowds among,
That weekly this arena throng,
O, pass not by!
But, with a frater-feeling strong,
Here, heave a sigh.

Is there a man, whose judgment clear
Can others teach the course to steer,
Yet runs, himself, life's mad career,
Wild as the wave,
Here pause—and, thro' the starting tear,
Survey this grave.

The poor inhabitant below
Was quick to learn and wise to know,
And keenly felt the friendly glow,
And softer flame;
But thoughtless follies laid him low,
And stain'd his name!

---

[a] bashful. [b] submit tamely.

Reader, attend! whether thy soul
Soars fancy's flights beyond the pole,
Or darkling grubs this earthly hole,
In low pursuit;
Know, prudent, cautious, self-control
Is wisdom's root.

[The poet's labours to feed the Kilmarnock press of John Wilson with sufficient materials to make up a volume of moderate thickness were drawing to a close; and, having bade farewell to "friends and foes," he had only now to compose his own Epitaph. The Elegy on himself, given at page 133 *supra*, did not altogether satisfy him; so he tasked his muse to the utmost, and produced in the text, what, with common consent, is allowed to be equally truthful, pathetic, and sublime.

In some extempore verses, dashed off at this period, he speaks thus lightly of his probable death as the result of his intended expatriation: —

And now I must mount on the wave,
My voyage perhaps there is death in;
But what of a watery grave?
The drowning a *poet* is naething!

We have not seen any MS. copy of the "Bard's Epitaph;" and the text of every edition exactly corresponds.]

EPITAPH FOR ROBERT AIKEN, ESQ.

(Kilmarnock Ed., 1786.)

Know thou, O stranger to the fame
Of this much lov'd, much honoured name!
(For none that knew him need be told)
A warmer heart death ne'er made cold.

[The above is a kindly compliment to his warm friend Mr Aiken—the "orator Bob" of the ecclesiastical courts, in their proceedings against Gavin Hamilton, and against Dr M'Gill. To this gentleman, who was a life-long friend of the bard from the date of their first acquaintance, the "Cottar's Saturday Night" is dedicated. He survived the poet, till 24th March 1807.]

EPITAPH FOR GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ.

(KILMARNOCK ED., 1786.)

THE poor man weeps—here Gavin sleeps,
Whom canting wretches blam'd;
But with such as he, where'er he be,
May I be sav'd or d—d!

[Here is a characteristic turn of the poet's pen in favour of his honest, but greatly maligned, friend and neighbour, Mr Hamilton, of whom we have already had occasion to say a good deal (see pp. 96, 100, 141, 142). He survived till 8th Feb. 1805, dying at the comparatively early age of fifty-two. A year after his death, his daughter Wilhelmina (referred to in one of the poet's letters) married the Rev. John Tod, a successor of Daddy Auld as parish minister of Mauchline. Mr Tod died in 1844, and his wife survived till 1858, leaving several descendants.]

EPITAPH ON "WEE JOHNIE."

(KILMARNOCK ED., 1786.)

Hic Jacet wee Johnie.

Whoe'er thou art, O reader, know
That Death has murder'd Johnie;
An' here his *body* lies fu' low;
For *saul* he ne'er had ony.

[From the day that Burns came before the world as an author till the day of his death, and seventy years beyond that event, the poet's readers had a tacit understanding that these four lines had been waggishly inserted in the last sheet of his book, as a satire—not a very wicked one—on his printer. How that understanding arose does not appear. The decent little typographer, however, (who was really a master of his own art, although, in the eyes of genius, destitute of the "divine afflatus"), was not a whit the worse of setting up in type his own "Hic jacet." He prospered in the world, and died at Ayr on 6th May 1821.

By his own instructions, his body was removed to his favourite Kilmarnock, where his true "Hic jacet" may be read in the High Church burial ground. He bequeathed, under very peculiar restrictions, a small mortification for educational purposes, to his native town, of which he was for sometime a magistrate.]

THE LASS O' BALLOCHMYLE.

(CURRIE 1800.)

Tune—"Ettrick Banks."

'TWAS even—the dewy fields were green,
On every blade the pearls hang ;*
The zephyr wanton'd round the bean,
And bore its fragrant sweets alang :
In ev'ry glen the mavis sang,
All nature list'ning seem'd the while,
Except where greenwood echoes rang,
Amang the braes o' Ballochmyle.

With careless step I onward stray'd,
My heart rejoic'd in nature's joy,
When, musing in a lonely glade,
A maiden fair I chanc'd to spy :
Her look was like the morning's eye,
Her air like nature's vernal smile ;
Perfection whisper'd, passing by,
"Behold the lass o' Ballochmyle !" [1]

Fair is the morn in flowery May,
And sweet is night in autumn mild ;
When roving thro' the garden gay,
Or wand'ring in the lonely wild :

---

* "Hang," a common Scotticism for *hung*.

But woman, nature's darling child!
There all her charms she does compile;
Even there her other works are foil'd [2]
By the bonie lass o' Ballochmyle.

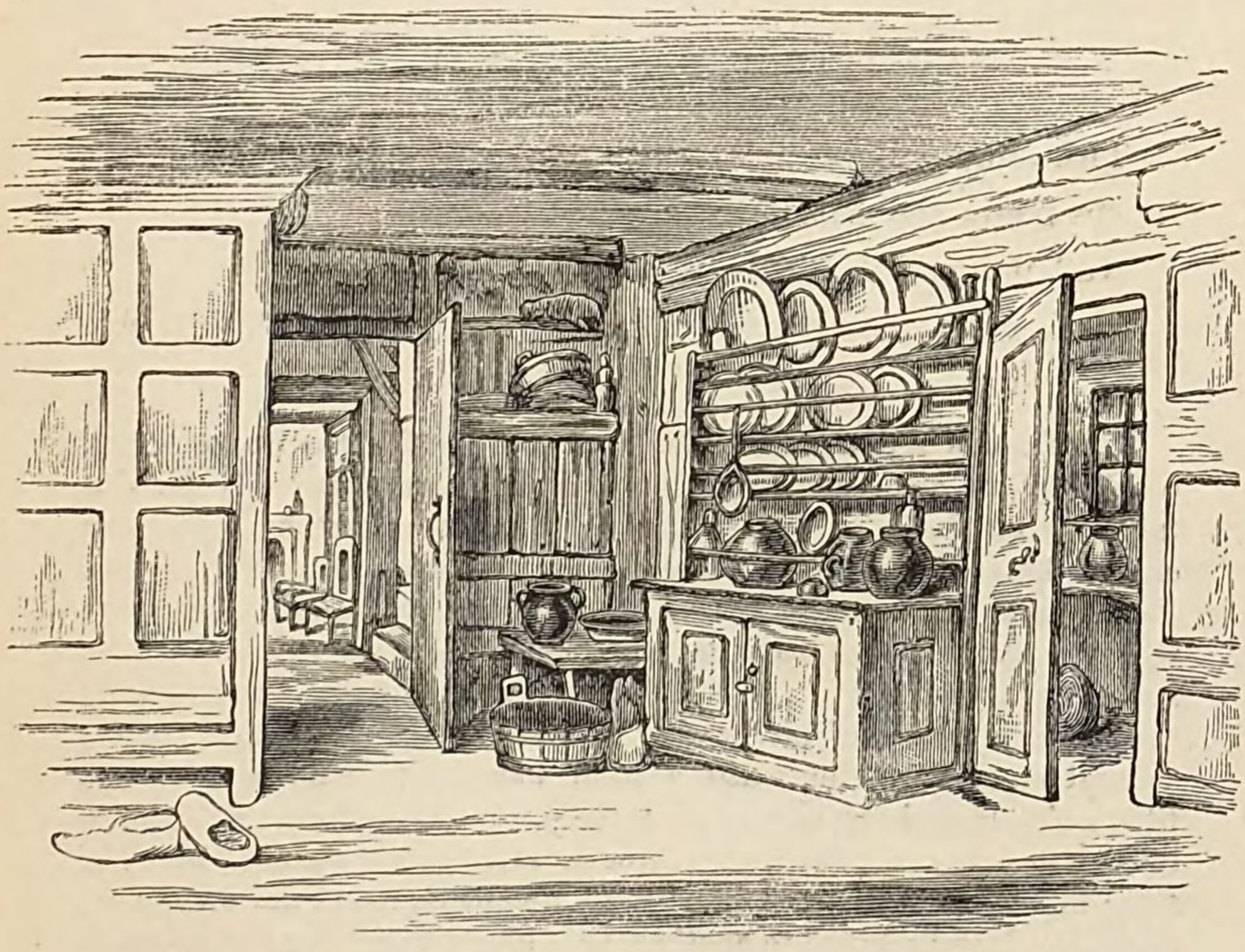
O had she been [3] a country maid,
And I the happy country swain,
Tho' shelter'd in the lowest shed
That ever rose on Scotland's [4] plain!
Thro' weary winter's wind and rain,
With joy, with rapture, I would toil;
And nightly to my bosom strain
The bonie lass o' Ballochmyle.

Then pride might climb the slipp'ry steep,
Where fame and honors lofty shine;
And thirst of gold might tempt the deep,
Or downward seek the Indian mine:
Give me the cot below the pine,
To tend the flocks or till the soil;
And ev'ry day have [5] joys divine
With the bonie lass o' Ballochmyle.

[According to the poet's own information, on a lovely evening in July 1786, before the summer's heat had browned the vernal glory of the season, and while the fragrant blossom yet lingered on the hawthorn, the muse suggested this famous lyric. His correcting of the press, involving many a journey to and from Kilmarnock, was then accomplished; and while waiting, no doubt with some anxiety, for publication day, he indulged himself with one of his wonted strolls on the banks of Ayr at Ballochmyle. In these romantic retreats, while his "heart rejoiced in nature's joy," fresh animation was added to the scene by the unexpected approach of Miss Williamina Alexander, the sister of the new proprietor of that estate; and although she only crossed his path like a vision, the above verses were the result of that incident.

In a warmly-composed letter, he enclosed the song to the lady; IV. 159. referring with much animation to the occasion which gave it birth.

That communication bears date the 18th of November 1786, when the success of his first publication had encouraged him to drop his emigration scheme, and to resolve on a second edition to be published in Edinburgh. His professed object in addressing the lady was to obtain her consent to the printing of the song in the new edition. It would appear, however, that Miss Alexander judged it prudent not to reply to the poet's request. But a day at length arrived when she was proud to exhibit the letter and the poem together in a glass case. A few years ago, the writer of this note had the pleasure of examining that interesting production, which now hangs on the wall of the "spence" or back-parlour of the farm of Mossgiel, the place selected about twenty years ago, by the relatives of the heroine of the song, as the fittest for its



exhibition to "all and sundries." The hand-writing is more careless than usual, and shews occasionally a mis-spelled word. The following are the variations:—

[1] The lily's hue, and rose's dye,
Bespoke the lass o' Ballochmyle.

[2] And all her other charms are foil'd. [3] O if she were, &c. [4] Scotia's.
[5] has (clearly a clerical error in grammar).

Our woodcut of the interior of Mossgiel farm-house is from a drawing

by Sir Wm. Allan, kindly lent by its possessor, W. F. Watson, Esq., Edinburgh.

The name of the present tenant of Mossgiel is James Wyllie, who entered in 1841. He succeeded James Orr, who entered when the Burns family left in 1798.

We have only to add that the "Bonie Lass" herself died unmarried in 1843, aged 88. She must thus have been 31 years old in 1786.]

MOTTO PREFIXED TO THE AUTHOR'S FIRST PUBLICATION.

(Kilmarnock Ed., 1786.)

31.

The simple Bard, unbroke by rules of art,
He pours the wild effusions of the heart;
And if inspir'd, 'tis Nature's pow'rs inspire;
Her's all the melting thrill, and her's the kindling fire.

[The famous Kilmarnock volume of Burns, with the above motto, (evidently his own composition), on its title-page, was ready for distribution on the same day (30th July 1786) on which he penned an excited letter to his friend Richmond in Edinburgh, from "Old Rome Forest," near Kilmarnock. The father of Jean Armour, having learned that the poet had executed a formal conveyance of his personal effects, including the copyright of his poems, and the profits to arise from their sale, in favour of his brother Gilbert, for the up-bringing of his "dear-bought Bess," obtained a legal warrant to apprehend Burns till he should find security to meet the prospective alimentary claim of his daughter Jean. The poet, through some secret channel, heard of this; and he thus confided himself to Richmond:—"I am wandering from one friend's house to another, and, like a true son of the Gospel, have nowhere to lay my head. I know you will pour an execration on her head; but spare the poor, ill-advised girl, for my sake. I write in a moment of rage, reflecting on my miserable situation—exiled, abandoned, forlorn." We have no letters of Burns dated from home during the following month of August, which seems to have been spent in secret journeys from one locality to another, gathering the fruits of his recent publication.]

LINES TO SIR JOHN KENNEDY.

(CUNNINGHAM'S ED., 1834.)

FAREWELL, dear friend! may gude luck hit you, 15
And 'mang her favorites admit you.
If e'er Detraction shore [a] to smit you,
May nane believe him,
And ony deil that thinks to get you,
Good Lord, deceive him!

[The above forms the concluding part of a letter to the same friend to whom he addressed the lines given at page 261. The letter was written from Kilmarnock, undated, but evidently early in August, for he says:—"I have at last made my public appearance, and am solemnly inaugurated into the numerous class. Could I have got a carrier, you should have had a score of vouchers for my authorship."]

LINES TO AN OLD SWEETHEART.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ONCE fondly lov'd, and still remember'd dear, 32.
Sweet early object of my youthful vows,
Accept this mark of friendship, warm, sincere,
Friendship! 'tis all cold duty now allows.

And when you read the simple artless rhymes,
One friendly sigh for him—he asks no more,
Who, distant, burns in flaming torrid climes,
Or haply lies beneath th' Atlantic roar.

[These lines appeared in Currie's first edition, but were, along with some other very interesting pieces, withdrawn in future editions of his work,—even Gilbert Burns omitting to restore them in 1820. The poet

---

[a] offer.

gave them a place in his MS. collection made for Captain Riddell, where we find the following heading and note attached :—"Written on the blank leaf of a copy of the first edition of my Poems, which I presented to an old sweetheart, then married.—'Twas the girl I mentioned in my letter to Dr Moore, where I speak of taking the sun's altitude. Poor Peggy! Her husband is my old acquaintance, and a most worthy fellow. When I was taking leave of my Carrick relations, intending to go to the West Indies, when I took farewell of her, neither she nor I could speak a syllable. Her husband escorted me three miles on my road, and we both parted with tears." See pp. 4 and 54 *supra*.]

LINES WRITTEN ON A BANK-NOTE.

(Gilbert Burns' Ed., 1820.)

Wae worth thy power, thou cursed leaf,
Fell source o' a' my woe and grief;
For lack o' thee I've lost my lass,
For lack o' thee I scrimp my glass:
I see the children of affliction
Unaided, through thy curst restriction:
I've seen the oppressor's cruel smile
Amid his hapless victim's spoil;
And for thy potence vainly wished,
To crush the villain in the dust:
For lack o' thee, I leave this much-lov'd shore,
Never, perhaps, to greet old Scotland more.

Kyle. R. B.

[The note is for one pound of the Bank of Scotland's issue, 1st March 1780. Internal evidence shows that the lines were written about August 1786. So far as appears, they were first printed in the "Morning Chronicle" of 27th May 1814, from which they were transferred to the "Scots Magazine" for September of same year. The original was then in the possession of Mr James F. Gracie of Dumfries. Both the handwriting and the composition attest its genuineness as a production of Burns.]

STANZAS ON NAETHING.

EXTEMPORE EPISTLE TO GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ.

(ALEX. SMITH'S ED., 1865.)

To you, sir, this summons I've sent,
Pray, whip till the pownie is fraething;[a]
But if you demand what I want,
I honestly answer you—naething.

Ne'er scorn a poor Poet like me,
For idly just living and breathing,
While people of every degree
Are busy employed about—naething.

Poor Centum-per-centum may fast,
And grumble his hurdies[b] their claithing,
He'll find, when the balance is cast,
He's gane to the devil for—naething.

The courtier cringes and bows,
Ambition has likewise its plaything;
A coronet beams on his brows;
And what is a coronet?—naething.

Some quarrel the Presbyter gown,
Some quarrel Episcopal graithing;[c]
But every good fellow will own
The quarrel is a' about—naething.

---

[a] frothing. [b] posteriors. [c] vestments.

The lover may sparkle and glow,
  Approaching his bonie bit gay thing;
But marriage will soon let him know
  He's gotten—a buskit up naething.

The Poet may jingle and rhyme,
  In hopes of a laureate wreathing,
And when he has wasted his time,
  He's kindly rewarded wi'—naething.

The thundering bully may rage,
  And swagger and swear like a heathen;
But collar him fast, I'll engage,
  You'll find that his courage is—naething.

Last night wi' a feminine whig—
  A poet she couldna put faith in;
But soon we grew lovingly big,
  I taught her, her terrors were naething.

Her whigship was wonderful pleased,
  But charmingly tickled wi' ae thing;
Her fingers I lovingly squeezed,
  And kissed her, and promised her—naething.

The priest anathèmas may threat—
  Predicament, sir, that we're baith in;
But when honor's reveillé is beat,
  The holy artillery's naething.

And now I must mount on the wave—
  My voyage perhaps there is death in;
But what is a watery grave?
  The drowning a Poet is naething.

' dressed

And now, as grim death's in my thought,
To you, sir, I make this bequeathing;
My service as long as ye've ought,
And my friendship, by God, when ye've naething.

[This piece was recorded by the author in the collection of unpublished poems made by him for his friend Riddell of Glenriddell. Alexander Smith obtained it in one of the many manuscript scroll books of the poet which Dr Currie declined to make use of in compiling his edition and biography. It is supposed to have been presented by Burns to Mrs Dunlop sometime in the year 1788. It seems to have passed through several hands, and at each remove to have been denuded of some of its pages. In a tattered condition it came at last into the hands of Mr Macmillan, the London publisher of Smith's edition of Burns. That editor remarks that "the last stanza is almost identical in thought and expression with the closing lines of the well-known Dedication to Gavin Hamilton." That last stanza, together with the one immediately preceding, fixes the date of this characteristic effusion as about August 1786.]

THE FAREWELL.

(Rev. H. Paul's Ed., 1819.)

Thomson

The valiant, in himself, what can he suffer?
Or what does he regard his single woes?
But when, alas! he multiplies himself,
To dearer selves, to the lov'd tender fair,
To those whose bliss, whose beings hang upon him,
To helpless children,—then, Oh then he feels
The point of misery festering in his heart,
And weakly weeps his fortunes like a coward:
Such, such am I!—undone!

Thomson's *Edward and Eleanora.*

23

Farewell, old Scotia's bleak domains,
Far dearer than the torrid plains,
Where rich ananas blow!
Farewell, a mother's blessing dear!
A brother's sigh! a sister's tear!
My Jean's heart-rending throe!

Farewell, my Bess ! tho' thou'rt bereft
Of my paternal care,
A faithful brother I have left,
My part in him thou'lt share !
Adieu too, to you too,
My Smith, my bosom frien' ;
When kindly you mind me,
O then befriend my Jean !

What bursting anguish tears my heart ;
From thee, my Jeany, must I part !
Thou, weeping, answ'rest—'No !'
Alas ! misfortune stares my face,
And points to ruin and disgrace,
I for thy sake must go !
Thee, Hamilton, and Aiken dear,
A grateful, warm adieu :
I, with a much-indebted tear,
Shall still remember you !
All-hail then, the gale then,
Wafts me from thee, dear shore !
It rustles, and whistles
I'll never see thee more !

[The author's painful anticipation of "Jean's heart-rending throe" in this effusion, seems to prove that it was composed prior to 3rd September 1786, at which date she was delivered of twins, a boy and a girl. It is observable in the poet's correspondence and other productions after that event, that he seems less disposed to carry out his resolution to go abroad. The admiration everywhere expressed for the lately published poems, began to throw a lustre on the name of Burns, and to point his way to a better fate than exile in a torrid clime. The birth of these children, and the improved prospects of the bard, inclined old Mr Armour to come to honourable terms with him. It was agreed that the Mossgiel family should adopt the boy, while Jean herself took charge of the girl, thus dividing the burden of maintenance on both parties equally.

A letter penned by Burns to Robert Muir shortly after the event, indicates the pleasant turn which matters had taken :—"you will have

heard that Armour has repaid me double. A very fine boy and girl have awakened a thought and feelings that thrill, some with tender pleasure, and some with foreboding anguish, through my soul.

I believe all hopes of staying at home will be abortive, but more of this when, in the latter part of next week, we shall meet."]

THE CALF.

(EDINBURGH ED., 1787.)

To the Rev. JAMES STEVEN, on his text, MALACHI, ch. iv. vers. 2.
"And ye shall go forth, and grow up, as CALVES of the stall."

Bible

1

RIGHT, sir! your text I'll prove it true,
Tho' heretics may laugh;
For instance, there's yoursel just now,
God knows, an unco *calf.*

And should[1] some patron be so kind,
As bless you wi' a kirk,
I doubt na, sir, but then we'll find,
Ye're still as great a *stirk.*

But, if the lover's raptur'd[2] hour,
Shall[3] ever be your lot,
Forbid it, ev'ry heavenly Power,
You e'er should be a *stot!*

Tho',[4] when some[5] kind connubial dear
Your but-an'-ben adorns,
The like has been that—you may wear
A noble head of *horns.*

And, in your lug,[6] most reverend James,
To hear you roar and rowte,
Few men o' sense will doubt your claims
To rank amang the *nowte.*

And when ye're number'd wi' the dead,
Below[7] a grassy hillock,
With justice they may mark your head—
"Here lies a famous *bullock!*"

[The eventful Sunday, 3d September 1786, which produced the poet's twins towards evening, brought forth this effusion at the morning service in Mauchline kirk. Burns had called upon Mr Gavin Hamilton in his way thither, expecting his friend might be going there too. Mr Hamilton declined going, but requested the poet to bring him a note of the discourse in not fewer than four stanzas of rhyme. A bet was made between them on this point, and accordingly Burns presented four of the above verses to Hamilton immediately after forenoon service. Dr Mackenzie happened to look in at Mr Hamilton's at the same time, and was so tickled with the performance that he extracted from the poet a promise of a copy, which reached him on the evening of same day. That copy, with two extra verses (the fourth and sixth of the text), is now in possession of his son, John Whitefoord Mackenzie, Esq., Edinburgh, by whose kindness we are enabled to record a few variations, and publish, for the first time, a note from Burns which accompanied the poem.

The Rev. James Steven, a native of Kilmarnock, was at this time the young assistant of the Rev. Robert Dow, of Ardrossan. On the present occasion he merely interchanged pulpits with Mr Auld. In 1787 he was called to London (Crown Court Chapel), and in 1803 was presented to the parochial charge of Kilwinning. He obtained the degree of D.D., and died of apoplexy in 1817. His second son, Charles, became minister of Stewarton.

VAR.—[1] And when some patron shall be kind To bless.
[2] mystic. [3] should. [4] And. [5] a. [6] to conclude. [7] Beneath.]

NATURE'S LAW—A POEM.

HUMBLY INSCRIBED TO GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ.

(ALDINE ED., 1839.)

Pope

"Great Nature spoke; observant man obey'd."—POPE.

1

LET other heroes boast their scars,
The marks of sturt and strife;
And other poets sing of wars,
The plagues ot human life;

Shame fa' the fun; wi' sword and gun
To slap mankind like lumber!
I sing his name, and nobler fame,
Wha multiplies our number.

Great Nature spoke, with air benign,
"Go on, ye human race;
This lower world I you resign;
Be fruitful and increase.
The liquid fire of strong desire
I've pour'd it in each bosom;
Here, on this hand, does Mankind stand,
And there, is Beauty's blossom."

The Hero of these artless strains,
A lowly bard was he,
Who sung his rhymes in Coila's plains,
With meikle mirth an' glee;
Kind Nature's care had given his share
Large, of the flaming current;
And, all devout, he never sought
To stem the sacred torrent.

He felt the powerful, high behest
Thrill, vital, thro' and thro';
And sought a correspondent breast,
To give obedience due:
Propitious Powers screen'd the young flow'rs,
From mildews of abortion;
And lo! the bard—a great reward—
Has got a double portion!

Auld cantie Coil may count the day,
As annual it returns,

The third of Libra's equal sway,
That gave another Burns,
With future rhymes, an' other times,
To emulate his sire;
To sing auld Coil in nobler style,
With more poetic fire.

Ye Powers of peace, and peaceful song,
Look down with gracious eyes;
And bless auld Coila, large and long,
With multiplying joys;
Lang may she stand to prop the land,
The flow'r of ancient nations;
And Burnses spring, her fame to sing,
To endless generations!

[This characteristic effusion is written in the same happy vein as "Willie Chalmers," which immediately follows. It celebrates a ruling quality in the constitutional structure of the body and soul of Burns, and reminds us of the epigram he afterwards inscribed on a window-pane of the Globe Tavern, Dumfries:—

"The Deities that I adore
Are social Peace and Plenty!
I'm better pleased to make one more,
Than be the death of twenty."

The reference, in the last stanza but one, is to Robert Burns, junior, who, born on 3d September 1786, died at Dumfries, 14th May 1857, in his 71st year. He was a man of solid acquirements, but without any "poetic fire." Every Scotchman, however, will proudly acknowledge the compliment conveyed in the closing stanza.]

SONG.—WILLIE CHALMERS.

(LOCKHART'S LIFE OF BURNS, 1829.)

Mr Chalmers, a gentleman in Ayrshire, a particular friend of mine, asked me to write a poetic epistle to a young lady, his Dulcinea. I had seen her, but was scarcely acquainted with her, and wrote as follows :—

Wi' braw new branks [a] in mickle pride,
And eke a braw new brechan,[b]
My Pegasus I'm got astride,
And up Parnassus pechin ; [c]
Whiles owre a bush wi' downward crush,
The doited [d] beastie stammers ;
Then up he gets, and off he sets,
For sake o' Willie Chalmers.

I doubt na, lass, that weel kenn'd name
May cost a pair o' blushes ;
I am nae stranger to your fame,
Nor his warm urgèd wishes.
Your bonie face, sae mild and sweet,
His honest heart enamours,
And faith ye'll no be lost a whit,
Tho' wair'd [e] on Willie Chalmers.

Auld Truth hersel might swear ye're fair,
And Honour safely back her ;
And Modesty assume your air,
And ne'er a ane mistak her :
And sic twa love-inspiring een
Might fire even holy palmers ;
Nae wonder then they've fatal been
To honest Willie Chalmers.

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[a] horse-curbing gear. [b] horse-collar. [c] breathing hard. [d] stupid. [e] spent.

I doubt na fortune may you shore [f]
Some nim-mou'd [g] pouther'd priestie,
Fu' lifted up wi' Hebrew lore,
And band upon his breastie:
But oh! what signifies to you
His lexicons and grammars;
The feeling heart's the royal blue,
And that's wi' Willie Chalmers.

Some gapin', glowrin countra laird
May warsle [h] for your favour;
May claw his lug, and straik his beard,
And hoast [i] up some palaver: [j]
My bonie maid, before ye wed
Sic clumsy-witted hammers,
Seek Heaven for help, and barefit skelp [k]
Awa wi' Willie Chalmers.

Forgive the Bard! my fond regard
For ane that shares my bosom,
Inspires my Muse to gie 'm his dues,
For deil a hair I roose [l] him.
May powers aboon unite you soon,
And fructify your amours,
And every year come in mair dear
To you and Willie Chalmers.

[This curious piece was obtained by Mr Lockhart from Lady Harriet Don, with the explanation as above prefixed, in the poet's own words. His model for the versification was an old Scottish lyric, entitled "Omnia vincit Amor," which will be found in the "Tea Table Miscellany," and also in Johnson's *Museum*.

The reader will afterwards see an interesting letter, which was addressed by the poet to "Willie Chalmers" from Edinburgh, shortly

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[f] proffer. [g] affectedly modest. [h] strive. [i] cough.
[j] nonsensical speech. [k] spring. [l] flatter.

after his arrival there. He was a writer and notary public in Ayr, who executed the notarial intimation of the poet's assignation in favour of Gibert Burns, on 24th July 1786. He was also employed under a mock mandate, dated 20th November thereafter, to superintend the public burning of a certain "nefarious, abominable, and wicked song or ballad" enclosed to him by Burns, just before leaving Ayrshire for Edinburgh.

Lady Harriet Don was sister of the poet's patron Lord Glencairn. She first met him during his Border tour on 12th May 1787, and his remark is—"Dine with Sir Alexander Don, a pretty clever fellow, but far from being a match for his divine lady."]

REPLY TO A TRIMMING EPISTLE RECEIVED FROM A TAILOR.

(Stewart and Meikle's Tracts, 1799.)

What ails ye now, ye lousie b—h,
To thresh my back at sic a pitch?
Losh, man! hae mercy wi' your natch,
Your bodkin's bauld;
I didna suffer half sae much
Frae Daddie Auld.

What tho' at times, when I grow crouse,
I gie their wames a random pouse,
Is that enough for you to souse
Your servant sae?
Gae mind your seam, ye prick-the-louse,
An' jag-the-flae!

King David, o' poetic brief,
Wrocht 'mang the lasses sic mischief
As fill'd his after-life wi' grief,
An' bluidly rants,
An' yet he's rank'd amang the chief
O' lang-syne saunts.

And maybe, Tam, for a' my cants,
My wicked rhymes, an' drucken rants,
I'll gie auld cloven Clootie's haunts
An unco slip yet,
An' snugly sit amang the saunts,
At Davie's hip yet!

But, fegs! the Session says I maun
Gae fa' upo' anither plan
Than garrin lasses coup the cran,
Clean heels owre body,
An' sairly thole their mother's ban
Afore the howdy.

This leads me on to tell for sport,
How I did wi' the Session sort;
Auld Clinkum, at the inner port,
Cried three times, "Robin!
Come hither lad, and answer for 't,
Ye're blam'd for jobbin!"

Wi' pinch I put a Sunday's face on,
An' snoov'd awa' before the Session:
I made an open, fair confession—
I scorn'd to lee,
An' syne Mess John, beyond expression,
Fell foul o' me.

A fornicator-lown he call'd me,
An' said my faut frae bliss expell'd me;
I own'd the tale was true he tell'd me,
"But, what the matter?
(Quo' I) I fear unless ye geld me,
I'll ne'er be better!"

"Geld you! (quo' he) an' what for no?
If that your right hand, leg, or toe
Should ever prove your spiritual foe,
You should remember
To cut it aff—an' what for no?—
Your dearest member!"

"Na, na, (quo' I,) I'm no for that,
Gelding's nae better than 'tis ca't;
I'd rather suffer for my faut,
A hearty flewit,
As sair owre hip as ye can draw 't,
Tho' I should rue it."

"Or, gin ye like to end the bother,
To please us a'—I've just ae ither—
When next wi' yon lass I forgather,
Whate'er betide it,
I'll frankly gie her 't a' thegither,
An' let her guide it."

But, sir, this pleas'd them warst of a',
An' therefore, Tam, when that I saw,
I said "Gude night," an' cam' awa',
An' left the Session;
I saw they were resolvèd a'
On my oppression.

[This rich performance (of its kind) has been reprinted, in a more or less complete form, in most of the standard editions of Burns' poems, since it first appeared. The Aldine, which gave it unmutilated, remarks that Cunningham "very decorously omitted the last five stanzas." As we do not approve of presenting an author's production in a garbled state, we prefer giving this piece entire, rather than to omit it altogether. We come to this conclusion the more readily, that we may have an opportunity of recording our dissent from a certain

class of the poet's annotators, who affect to disbelieve that he had any hand in its composition.

The person to whom it is addressed was Thomas Walker, a tailor resident at Pool, near the village of Ochiltree. He was in terms of intimacy with William Simson, the parish schoolmaster there, to whom Burns addressed the poetical Epistle given at page 121 *supra*. The tailor was rather an eccentric character, and could string rhymes together as fluently, if not so much to the point, as could his friend the Latin Schoolmaster. Having seen Burns' epistle to Simson, which was extracted from the poet of Mossgiel by way of reply to a complimentary letter addressed to him by the dominie, Walker conceived that he might experience the same good-fortune by sending the poet a brotherly epistle. Accordingly he composed and strung together a dreary performance of twenty-six stanzas, in Burns' favourite measure, and despatched it to Mossgiel by a secure hand. Here is a sample of the contents, taken from Tom's own recorded copy in his MS. collection, now lying before us :—

" Had I a night o' thee or twa,
An' guid tobacco for to blaw,
Altho' it was baith frost and snaw,
I wadna weary ;
The crack thou could sae brawly ca',
An' keep me cheery.

Or could we meet some Mauchline Fair—
I sometimes tak a bottle there—
Thou'd be as welcome to a share
As thou could'st be ;
Wae worth the purse that wadna spare
A drink to thee !"

As may well be conjectured, Burns was not to be caught by such bait as this: by and by, however, the publication of the Kilmarnock volume, seemed, in Tom's eyes, a fair opportunity for renewing the attempt to extract a reply from the poet. He changed his tactics, however, and tried the experiment of rousing the poet by assuming the character of a moral censor. He fortunately exhibited his performance to Simson before despatching it, by whose advice the epistle was reduced in extent from twenty-one to ten stanzas. This required some re-arrangement and alterations, which the schoolmaster managed with so much skill, that Allan Cunningham has suggested that Burns himself may have been the author of the "Trimming epistle" as well as the reply to it. Walker's second performance is also now before us, in his own manuscript, and on comparing the original with the "Epistle from a Tailor," as printed by Stewart, the conviction is forced upon us that Simson had as much to do with its composition as Walker had.

Both Simson, who died in 1815, and Walker, who was buried in Sorn a few years earlier, saw Stewart's publication attributing the authorship of the verses in the text to Burns—a fact proclaimed by the

verses themselves. During the lifetime of those worthies, and not till a quarter of a century thereafter, did any writer ever venture to deny the authorship of the verses to Burns. An absurd theory respecting them, however, has been since started (and eagerly supported by some innovators) that Burns never answered either of the tailor's epistles; but that Simson composed the reply attributed to Burns, imitated his hand-writing, and despatched it by a circuitous route to Walker. It is asserted that the pious tailor swallowed the ruse, but was so horror-stricken by its blasphemy and bawdry, that he consigned it to the flames. The latter fact we shall not dispute, for the original manuscript has not been recovered.

We have already adverted to the fact that John Richmond of Mauchline was cousin to Thomas Stewart, the printer and publisher. This at once suggests that Burns had consigned both the "Tailor's Epistle" and a copy of his own "Reply" to Richmond, the Clerk of the "Court of Equity," and that through this source the documents passed into that publisher's hands.

To the kindness of the Rev. David Hogg, Kirkmahoe, we are indebted for the use of Tom Walker's manuscripts above referred to. In early life, that gentleman acted as assistant to William Simson's brother Patrick, in the parish-school of Ochiltree, and obtained Walker's manuscripts from the tailor's representatives in Pool. Walker appears to have at length come out as an author; for James Paterson records, in his "Contemporaries of Burns," that he published a pamphlet called "A Picture of the World."]

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BSB Bayerische StaatsBibliothek

MDZ Münchener DigitalisierungsZentrum Digitale Bibliothek

Burns, Robert,

The works of Robert Burns (Edited by Wm. Scott Douglas)

Bd.: 1

1893

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